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## Retail Store Managers' Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Amala Luncheon

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2021

Abstract

Retail Store Managers' Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement

by

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MPhil, Walden University, 2019

MSc, University of Leicester, 2004

BS, University of Guyana, 1997

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

May 2021

## Abstract

Emotional intelligence is an essential trait for managers to possess to be effective and successful in organizations. Soft skills are becoming as crucial as making quotas.

Scholarly literature lacks research on emotional intelligence and employee engagement in retail in St. Lucia. Engaged employees could stay motivated during adversity and help maintain an organization's culture. The purpose of this exploratory case study was to examine how retail store managers in St. Lucia perceived their emotional intelligence influences employee engagement. The conceptual framework that grounded the study was emotional intelligence and employee engagement from an organizational performance perspective. The data collection process included semistructured interviews with a purposeful sample consisting of 14 retail store managers from St. Lucia who have been in that role for at least 1 year, as well as reviewing archival data. In a year the manager would have experienced a complete business cycle. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions. I conducted coding and thematic analysis of 14 interviews. Several patterns and themes emerged from the data analysis, including emotional intelligence, controlling emotions, coaching, legacy, training, hiring well, communication, and personalized relationships. Increased emotional intelligence training emerged as useful in the St. Lucian business landscape and the Caribbean by extension. Researching other sectors at varying levels may give a broader understanding of how emotional intelligence is perceived. The findings of this study may be useful to stakeholders and organizational leaders to allow developing strategies to build more emotionally intelligent and engaged organizations and could positively affect social change.

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Lennox, and Julie Luncheon. They have been a constant source of encouragement, prayer, and inspiration. They have always understood why I persevered and have been a constant reminder that anything is possible with God. My siblings - Ernest, Aquila, Tyson, and Trevaughn and their families have been of tremendous support and I am happy to share this work with them.

Finally, my friends and colleagues have understood the importance of this journey, and I look forward to celebrating this achievement with them.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Employee engagement is a continuous process in need of integration across all facets of the employer-employee relationship and employee life cycle (Albrecht et al., 2015). Anel and Karl (2018) noted that direct supervisors and sales managers should make employee engagement a priority and take responsibility for its implementation. When employees are not engaged, problems with turnover can occur. Bhalerao and Kumar (2016) highlighted the importance of investing in and grooming leaders with emotional competencies, to manage emotions, as well as inspire subordinates to take ownership of their organizational goals. It is from this perspective that I undertook this study.

Chapter 1 begins with background information and the research problem, purpose of the study, and research questions that guide the study. The conceptual framework was built on Kahn's (1990) employee engagement research and Salovey and Mayer's (1990) emotional intelligence theory. I briefly mention the research methodology. I then discuss assumptions and limitations. The significance of the study highlights the possible contribution to the body of knowledge as well as practical implications.

My focus in this study was to explore how retail store managers perceive their emotional intelligence influences sales associates' employee engagement. I conducted a qualitative exploratory case study on the island of St. Lucia in the Caribbean. I selected 14 managers from different retail stores to participate in the study by being interviewed via Zoom. They answered open-ended questions about their use of emotional intelligence and employee engagement. Vasileiou et al. (2019) noted that data saturation is achieved

faster with a homogeneous sample; by the 12th of 60 interviews, in their research, there was no new information. I also utilized archival data. My aim as the researcher was to collect robust data on their perceptions of how they use emotional intelligence to influence their employees and affect the organization.

### Background of the Study

Akhtar et al. (2015) highlighted the rise in studies conducted about employee engagement and the factors that can influence behavior. Akhtar et al. showed that personality factors are predictors of work engagement at varying levels. High extraversion, agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness, as well as low neuroticism, according to Xanthopoulou et al. (2009), are related to high levels of work engagement.

Possessing emotional intelligence alone cannot help in achieving higher performance; effective use is necessary (Baksh Baloch et al., 2014). Baksh Baloch et al. (2014) sought to find the relationship between emotional intelligence and employees' productivity by exploring a method that could connect emotional intelligence with employee performance accurately. The research was based on the concept that the effective handling of emotional intelligence in the workplace would affect productivity positively. Baksh Baloch et al. showed that emotional intelligence significantly affects employee performance, productivity, and satisfaction in one university over another.

Bande et al. (2015) discussed emotions in the workplace as an underdeveloped area of study, with specific focus on emotional intelligence and resilience with respect to employees' intention to leave. Resilience is critical as it allows a person with coping skills to emerge from stressful situations stronger. (Bande et al., 2015). According to

Bande et al., psychologically, emotions are strong and can influence a salesperson's behavior. It is generally accepted that emotions exist in the workplace, specifically in relation to sales, but the area is understudied (Bande et al., 2015). Li et al. (2019) noted that internal service quality has a significant indirect effect on sales performance through the mediator of work engagement. A salesperson could be satisfied with the organization but unhappy with their supervisor, which is enough to trigger turnover intention. (Shanahan & Hopkins, 2019). Bande et al. (2015) analyzed work-family conflict and salesperson emotional exhaustion as mediating variables that affect emotional intelligence and resilience and eventually propensity to leave. Bande et al. highlighted that developing emotional skills helps cope with work-related stress and diminish the intention to leave. Like Akhtar et al. (2015), Bande et al. highlighted the possibility of hiring employees with high emotional intelligence is perhaps something that organizations can consider because it is known to help stem turnover and allow for better organizational performance.

In the Caribbean, Devonish (2016) suggested the importance of emotional intelligence be emphasized in hiring decisions, training and development planning efforts, and activities if there is a need to optimize employee performance. Gupta and Bajaj (2018) explored emotional intelligence as an independent construct and sought to bring coherence to the literature on emotional intelligence by arguing how emotional intelligence differs from personality and cognitive intelligence. Gupta and Bajaj (2018) established the construct of emotional intelligence as a robust predictor of important outcomes. When Salimath and Kavitha (2015) examined the drivers of employee

engagement beyond the superficial relationship with a supervisor, the focus of the study was on the organizational effectiveness and its impact on employee behavior. Salimath and Kavitha provided a platform to build on for more in-depth research into the role of the store manager as it relates to employee engagement.

One of the future practical implications of Akhtar et al. (2015) is that by understanding the predictors of work engagement, organizations can select employees based on personality traits such as emotional intelligence. Understanding the predictors of work engagement is important to my research because it contains tenets that can be used as examples and guides. Giving an organization an opportunity to find strong candidates by changing their selection process from the beginning could be effective. Akhtar et al. noted that work engagement is as critical an antecedent of organizational outcome, including productivity. The role that emotional intelligence plays in the workplace has been studied by several researchers and continues to form the basis for training programs where there are deficiencies or improvements in emotional connections can be made. When employees are engaged, their productivity has been known to increase along with organizational performance. Bande et al. (2015) noted that emotional intelligence has been studied in organizations, but there is a need to study it from the management of salespeople perspective. That gap in the literature is where I will contribute with this research.

### Problem Statement

Individuals with high emotional intelligence possess the ability to adapt their internal feelings and emotional responses and are more likely to experience more job

satisfaction (Urquijo et al., 2019). Understanding the effects of the influence of sales management control, support, and satisfaction on salespeople's job satisfaction will make sales managers aware of the importance of their roles. This understanding will allow the sales managers to adjust their control mechanisms, provide adequate support, and work on key issues that contribute to salespeople's job satisfaction. (Ružić et al., 2018). A positive motivational construct, such as work engagement, may underlie the association between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction (Extremiera et al., 2018). An organization's capacity to manage employee engagement is closely related to its ability to achieve high performance levels and superior business results (Salimath & Kavitha, 2015). Employee engagement reflects a two-way relationship and in this regard, leaders who show transformational leadership behavior of emotional, inspirational, and motivation, are more suitable for engaging employees (Marwan et al., 2019). Although Jameson et al. (2016) noted that emotional intelligence is a competency that employers prefer graduates to possess, it is still not widely taught at university, leaving room in the workplace for leaders to nurture that ability.

Dechawatanapaisal (2018) noted that organizations invest in recruiting and selecting employees, then invest more in training and developing them with time. To achieve a return on investment, organizations need to retain well-trained employees so that they contribute to the organization's success. There are several consequences that result from employee turnover: there is loss of productivity, reduced quality of work, morale is affected, and management loses time and incurs costs in having to hire and train new employees (Dechawatanapaisal, 2018; Narayanan et al., 2019). Al Ghazo et al.



(2019) noted that traits of emotional intelligence among employees should be the focus of more concern, and emotional intelligence should be considered as the main prerequisite, when recruiting, selecting, and promoting employees. Narayanan et al. (2019) highlighted that discussions on productivity and effectiveness are being researched and turnover, which is critical to organizational effectiveness, remains unresolved. Edmondson et al. (2019) noted that managerial support encompasses a variety of ways in which supervisors interact with individual employees. Support can be provided on technical aspects such as training on selling skills, and from a social-emotional perspective such as through encouragement, empathy, and recognition (Edmondson et al., 2019). Kumar et al. (2018) discussed the importance of both organizational and managerial support for employee development by examining different sources of support: supervisors and organization, and in the specific context of support for development opportunities as compared with general support.

The general business management problem that I addressed in this study is that there is an issue identifying, acquiring, and retaining top sales talent in sales organizations. (Rodriguez et al., 2019). A moderate level of support from the manager increased performance and generated positive results. Too much support, or an overreliance on managerial input, can leave salespeople unsure of how to handle tough situations such as a needy client or an aggressive competitor (Vieira et al., 2019). Emotional disturbance caused by customer incivility could negatively affect frontline employees and could filter into the organizational culture. This potential for altered employee emotions gives rise to a call for further investigation to scrutinize the influence

of managerial interventions and coworker climates on customer-induced burnout. (Yang, & Meng-Chan Lau, 2019). Bani-Melhem et al. (2020) noted that the presence of situational factors determines the strength of employees' response to uncivil behaviors. If an employee has a strong turnover intention, this intention can significantly influence their reactions to customer incivility. If the threat of termination does not exist as a deterrent, then revenge intention is a possibility. Dimitrov (2015) noted that effective leaders should exhibit humane features (affect, emotion, social intelligence, and personable disposition) and actions (care, empathy, encouragement, flexibility, and cooperation), concurring with the maxim that organizations are only profitable when their employees are. Human resources practitioners should emphasize the traits of a good coach, friend, and facilitator in organizational trainings; and, organizations should support this image by the maintenance of an appropriate organizational culture (a humane organizational culture) (Dimitrov, 2015). The specific business management problem that I addressed in this study is that the manager's direct role in employee engagement through an organizational culture of caring may be lacking (Yang, & Meng-Chan Lau, 2019). Yang and Meng-Chan Lau (2019) highlighted that although a manager's emotional intelligence would allow them to temper their employee's mood swings, their customer orientation values may not align with those of their subordinates and could place the subordinates in a less than ideal emotional state. There must be recognition that managers can exhibit both supportive and unsupportive behaviors, meaning there likely is scope for improvement among even the most supportive managers (Teoh et al., 2016). Akhtar et al. (2015), and Bande et al. (2015) noted that emotional intelligence has been

shown to play a role in employee engagement. Without emotional intelligence, the manager may lack the capacity to lead effectively, which may lead to turnover in the salesforce. Opportunities exist to integrate empirical evidence to highlight the role of emotional intelligence in the workplace, beyond what personality or IQ measure (Gupta & Bajaj, 2018). Future research could be conducted on how emotional intelligence of a direct leader affects the engagement of his/her subordinates rather than the emotional intelligence behaviors that describe only the leader's behaviors (Akhtar et al., 2015; Milhem et al., 2019). The fact that there is a paucity of research on this topic in the Caribbean and a specifically in a retail setting could allow for a contribution to positive social change for organizations. The implications for positive social change include the potential benefit to human resource managers, leaders, managers, and employees of organizations as the findings may provide insight into both emotional intelligence and employee engagement in the retail environment. The information in the findings may help improve managers' emotional intelligence skills, which could in turn improve employee engagement and improve organizational success when employee turnover declines.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore how retail store managers in St. Lucia perceived their emotional intelligence influences employee engagement and contributes to the organization's success. To address the gap in the literature on emotional intelligence, employee engagement, organizational success, and the retail environment, I conducted interviews with 14 store managers from retail

organizations in St. Lucia. Reviewing archival data was also used as a method of data collection. The data contained information that shows retention and attrition as well as the company's profit or loss information for the last three years. This information was assessed in relation to employee engagement.

### Research Questions

The overarching research questions that guided this study were:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of retail store managers in St. Lucia regarding how they use emotional intelligence to influence employee engagement?

SQ1. How do retail store managers see themselves as contributing to the organization's success?

### Conceptual Framework

Within the domain of business administration, emotions are considered negative (Baksh Baloch et al., 2014). Cartwright and Holmes (2006) noted that the changing nature of work and organizations, which has led to longer working hours, ineffective leadership and management, work intensification, and layering of organizations has caused an increase in employee cynicism. Employee cynicism associated with workplace burnout and chronic interpersonal stressors lead to poor job performance, which is in direct contradiction with employee engagement. The concepts which guided this exploratory case study were emotional intelligence and employee engagement. Salovey and Mayer (1990) introduced emotional intelligence and defined it as the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to

use this information to guide one's thinking and actions. Emotional intelligence predicts the productivity of an employee by understanding and guiding emotions in the desired manner (Baksh Baloch et al., 2014). A lack of managers' and employees' understanding of why and how emotional intelligence could influence the overall success and productivity of organizations could be detrimental. Wisker and Poulis (2015) researched emotional intelligence and sales performance, and they found that consistent with prior research, the effects of emotional intelligence on job performance is not always linear in effect. Wisker and Poulis supported the concept of emotional intelligence and the sales associate's ability to manage their own emotions and those of others, and they suggested that researchers and practitioners not discount the concept of emotional intelligence as one of the potential factors that contribute to sales performance. Wisker and Poulis conducted research in the Malaysian financial sector and the findings supported prior research that salespeople adapt their presentation when there are multiple, complex units involved in the sale, and the customer could provide significant profit potential.

Sasaki and Royal (2019) noted that employees are held accountable for their actions in environments where they control their own engagement. They are motivated to understand the why and coached and supported in the how. That type of culture creates engaged followers.

Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that a conceptual framework is a process rather than a product. It includes guiding theories or assumptions of the researcher, the goals or expectations of the study, and the formal or informal theories that contribute to contextualizing the study. Kumar and Antonenko (2014) described it as assembled piece

by piece by the researcher rather than identified as a ready-to-use model from the literature. Ivey (2015) highlighted that overlooking the importance of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks could see the acceptance of answers that omit key parts of the whole or misinterpret findings. Scientific research is based on comparing what we think is known to what the data repeatedly demonstrates. Going straight to the findings without the theory is not rigorous. Researching with human subjects sometimes involves variables that behave differently with different participants. Using a conceptual framework allows the researcher a chance to identify the linkages and ideas they want to understand.

#### Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative exploratory case study method to explore and understand the perceptions of retail store managers regarding how emotional intelligence influences employee engagement in a retail environment. I used interviews and archival data for data collection. Qualitative research is used to acquire an understanding of reasons for phenomena, and when a more in-depth understanding of participants' attitudes, patterns and behaviors is required (Barnham, 2015). Qualitative research is characterized by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspect of social life and its methods which (in general) generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis. (McCusker, & Gunaydin, 2015). Yin (2009) highlighted that a case study is used when researchers are investigating how individuals, groups or organizations respond to a social problem, such as exploring emotional intelligence in an organization or fostering a culture of employee engagement. Marshall and Rossman (2016) observed that case studies have explicit focus on context and dynamic interactions and highlighted that given the interpretative nature

of qualitative inquiry, researchers reconstruct a case, as opposed to identifying and isolating it. In this study, I used a single group of individuals.

I considered quantitative and mixed-methods approaches but they were not appropriate for this study. McCusker and Gunaydin (2015) noted that quantitative methods start with a researcher knowing precisely what they are looking for, and they include more generalized samples that emphasize statistical information as opposed to individual perceptions.

A phenomenological approach would not have been appropriate because that type of research focuses inwardly on the lived experiences of the participants. My topic focused on how managers perceive their emotional intelligence affects their employee engagement. Mapp (2008) highlighted that the goal of a phenomenological study is to describe a lived experience and answer questions of meaning and understanding from that participant's perspective. Conducting the research in the Caribbean is only geographic in nature and not cultural. The research study did not lend itself to an ethnographic approach. Handwerker (2006) noted ethnographers seek to understand people from the inside looking out and accurately characterize spatial and temporal autocorrelation. Grounded theory was not appropriate because the goal is not to build theory from the research. Cho and Lee (2014) noted that grounded theory could be both a method and methodology as it is the systematic generation of theory from systematic research. Yin (2009) suggested choosing the case study method when the researcher seeks to explain a current situation or social circumstance; has limited or no control over the behavioral

events, and when the study focuses on a contemporary and current phenomenon as opposed to a historical one.

The target population was retail store managers from the Caribbean island of St. Lucia. Store managers, who have been in their position for more than 1 year, were given an opportunity to explore their utilization of emotional intelligence and how it influences employee engagement in their sales associates, as well as the organization's culture. The research generated could be beneficial to organizations seeking to improve employee engagement using emotional intelligence. Conducting the research using different retail organizations added rigor to the data.

I recorded the interviews and transcribed them individually after each one was completed. It was my intention to use NVivo 12 along with manual coding to determine codes and themes that emerged. I used MAXQDA for analysis instead. I used coding and narrative analysis to categorize and connect the data in the process of analyzing the data collected for the study. Similarities emerged and were identified and examined to help draw conclusions. I also analyzed discrepant data for relevance. I compared and reviewed notes from the archival data collected from the retail organizations whose managers participated in the study for similarities guided by the conceptual framework. Deller (2019) noted that obtaining archival data could be time consuming and it is best to request what is critical to the research question as opposed to data that could be nice to have. Archival analysis allows researchers to understand complex real-world situations in a way they may not discover simply by asking questions. Yin (2009) noted that archival



data are appropriate when the research question takes the form of who, what, where, how many, and how much.

### Definitions

**Adaptability.** Parent and Lovelace (2018) noted that it is helpful for managers to frame employees' reactions to change in adaptability terms to better facilitate positive change. Adaptability refers to how well or how quickly an individual responds to the changing environment within which they function.

**Emotional intelligence.** Emotional intelligence is the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions. (Salovey & Mayer, 1990)

**Employee disengagement.** Kahn (1990) defined employee disengagement as the uncoupling of selves from work roles; in disengagement, people withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances.

**Employee engagement.** Employee engagement is the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; engaged personnel employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances (Kahn, 1990).

Engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

**General mood.** In Bar-On's emotional intelligence inventory, the general mood refers to a list of 17 items that refers to the respondent's ability to enjoy himself or herself, others and life in general (Casale et al., 2019).

Organizational culture. Organizational culture is the basic model assumptions that a given group gave, discovered or developed in learning to cooperate with external adjustment problems and internal integration and that can be considered valid and therefore can be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (Schein, 1992)

Stress management. Strategies used to minimize tension in the workplace and alleviate instances that cause anxiety in individuals and teams are seen to be stress management. They could include reduced workload, job redesign, department restructuring, and enhanced interpersonal relationships. (Pignata et al., 2017)

Workplace burnout. Burnout was initially conceptualized and described as a combination of emotional exhaustion (feeling drained and worn out without the resources to “reload”), depersonalization (having a detached and negatively tinged response to clients), and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (feelings of inadequacy and thoughts of no longer achieving anything meaningful in the workplace) (Judd et al., 2017; Maslach and Leiter, 2016).

### Assumptions

In the course of conducting this research, I assumed a number of factors could be influential. One assumption was that acquiring 15 to 20 participants who have been managers for at least 1 year would be a straight-forward task and the number of participants would have been enough to conduct a robust study. A second assumption was that the number of participants that were interviewed would have been representative of the population intended for the study. I also assumed that the interview questions

presented to the participants would have been answered truthfully and without bias. I assumed that the managers selected to be interviewed were familiar with both emotional intelligence and employee engagement and the interviews would just be a matter of speaking about topics they are already practicing or trying to improve. I also assumed that the participants in the study would understand and believe that the researcher is independent of their organizations and the information they disclose would be kept confidential.

### Scope and Delimitations

I intended to collect data for this study using interviews and archival data. The participants whom I interviewed are managers at retail organizations in the Caribbean. The study was conducted in the Caribbean only. I utilized a single island - St. Lucia. I was delimited by the period within which I conducted the research, the choice of design, and the interview questions that I asked.

The retail organizations that I used are well established in St. Lucia and sell a product or service to the general public. Managers whom I selected to participate in the study had been in their position for at least 1 year. Managers who had been in their positions for less than 1 year may not have adequately dealt with employee engagement or gone through a full cycle that dealt with retention and turnover issues.

### Limitations

According to Simon and Goes (2013), one of the limitations of case studies is the inability to make causal references. The fact that one group of people or one organization

had a specific result does not indicate that similar findings would generalize in other organizations.

The responses from participants in the interviews could have been a limitation. They may have been affected by events outside of my control on the day of the interview. Yin (2009) indicated that the behaviors in case study research fluctuate from person to person and organization to organization.

Research bias was a potential limitation. The fact that there is limited research on emotional intelligence and employee engagement in the Caribbean is a significant factor in the geographic setting for the study. Being a Caribbean native made me want to make a significant contribution. Following the established protocols to minimize research bias kept it to a minimum.

A gap in the literature on emotional intelligence and employee engagement in retail in the Caribbean was a potential limitation. There is no suggestion in existing literature of a way forward that includes the Caribbean. Future research may be limited because of the lack of scholarly thought on the subject. The study could also have been limited by the participants in the study. Although they may qualify based on their position, they may not have been representative of the Caribbean population or be open to answer the questions honestly.

### Significance of the Study

The results of this exploratory case study may make a significant contribution of new knowledge to the literature on emotional intelligence and employee engagement specifically in the retail setting in St. Lucia and the Caribbean. This new knowledge

could be used to improve how managers look at their relationships with sales associates and the part they play in affecting employee engagement, which could lead to reduced turnover. Delpechitre et al. (2019) noted that when a salesperson has empathy, they are better able to understand and acknowledge customers' emotional status. It is essential that when managers select new salespeople, they emphasize and evaluate their empathetic ability. B ande et al. (2015) highlighted the importance of promoting the development of emotional skills to help combat situations that could affect factors that contribute to employee engagement.

#### Significance to Practice

The findings of the study can be useful to the human resources and training departments in developing programs to address existing organizational performance issues, including employee engagement that could be resolved using emotional intelligence training. The findings could further assist the organization in general, human resource managers, and store managers specifically, foster a culture that could increase their profitability by having employees who are more engaged and thereby more productive. There are benefits to be had from engaged employees and from leaders who exhibit emotional intelligence. The organization can explore them.

#### Significance to Theory

Prior research on both emotional intelligence and employee engagement in retail has made contributions to the body of knowledge in the United States and further afield but not much has been done in the Caribbean. The results of this study may provide

insight into the magnitude of the gap between emotional intelligence and employee engagement in a retail environment, specifically in the Caribbean.

### Significance to Social Change

The implication for positive social change is that the study could provide an opportunity for retail store managers to utilize both emotional intelligence and employee engagement as a means of reducing the rate of turnover. A focus on the significance of fostering a culture of employee engagement could make the organization more people centered. Devonish (2016) noted that managers should emphasize the importance of emotional intelligence in training and development activities if there is a need to optimize employee performance at work. Pekaar et al. (2017) suggested that employees be encouraged to use their other-focused emotional-intelligence dimensions more during their work because this use could influence job performance outcomes. Companies could implement specialized training programs in which both self- and other-focused emotional intelligence are trained to raise awareness of the direct effects of the appraisal of others' emotions.

### Summary and Transition

In Chapter 1, I provided an insight into the topic and why it is an important one to be studied at this level. The general problem is that there is an issue identifying, acquiring, and retaining top sales talent in organizations. (Rodriguez et al., 2019). The specific problem is that the manager's direct role in employee engagement through an organizational culture of caring may be lacking (Yang & Meng-Chan Lau, 2019). The manager's role and their interaction with subordinates may be affected by their view of

the customer and how they are to be treated from the organization's perspective. I used an exploratory case study to gather information on the topic using archival data and interviews. Yin (2009) noted that using more than one data collection method adds depth to the case. The topic was focused on how retail store managers use their emotional intelligence to influence employee engagement. The participants were retail store managers who had been in their position for at least 1 year and may possess knowledge that could have been beneficial to this study.

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the literature on emotional intelligence and employee engagement in organizations. Literature from research conducted in retail environments is also included. The literature review highlights where there is a gap in the knowledge and identifies where future research is needed.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Emotional intelligence is an ability possessed by successful leaders. Bande et al. (2015) noted that few studies exist in relation to the management of salespeople. Extremera et al. (2018) found that work engagement could underpin emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. An organization's capacity to manage employee engagement is closely related to its ability to achieve high performance levels and superior business results (Salimath & Kavitha, 2015), thereby making the relationship dyadic as described by Marwan et al. (2019). Whereas Jameson et al. (2016) noted that emotional intelligence is a competency that employers prefer graduates to possess, it is still not widely taught at the university level, leaving room in the workplace for leaders to nurture that ability. Even though researchers have identified a relationship between leader's broad personality and employee engagement, future research could be conducted on how emotional intelligence of a direct leader affects the engagement of his/her subordinates (Akhtar et al., 2015).

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to address a gap in knowledge and to explore how retail store managers in St. Lucia perceive emotional intelligence influences employee engagement. Despite existing research conducted in this area, more studies are needed to determine the influence emotional intelligence has on employee engagement in the Caribbean. This information could provide human resources managers with valuable insight for hiring decisions. This research could also support new and existing training that could encourage employee engagement and the benefits it provides. This study helps contribute to the gap in knowledge by providing information



to help leaders in the organization better understand the perception of emotional intelligence from the retail managers' and relate it to employee engagement. The information collected in this case study could also bring awareness to emotional intelligence and employee engagement in a retail setting, inspire other researchers, specifically in the Caribbean, and encourage further research in this area. In the literature review, I researched themes that could result in growth for both the organization and its leaders should it be reviewed. Several of the linkages made between concepts in the research could empower managers to guide employees, and the organization in a direction that could increase employee engagement. This study can contribute to social change by helping leaders better understand the influence of emotional intelligence on employee engagement in a retail setting. If used, the findings of the research could help leaders to develop emotional intelligence in the store managers in a way that positively influences employee engagement.

My main goal was to explore how the store managers perceive their emotional intelligence influences employee engagement. The topics included in this chapter are listed under the following subheadings: Literature Search Strategy, Conceptual Framework, Literature Review, Emotional Intelligence, Emotional intelligence Models, Emotional intelligence and Sales, Employee Engagement, Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement, Measuring Employee Engagement, Employee Engagement and Sales, Measuring Emotional Intelligence and Summary and Conclusions.

### Literature Search Strategy

I found the articles that I used in this study by using the Walden University Library for searches. The keywords used in searches to help find a gap in the literature and situate the problem were emotional intelligence, employee engagement, work engagement, retail environment, management problem, emotional intelligence models, emotional intelligence and sales, emotional intelligence and retail, employee engagement and emotional intelligence, employee engagement and retail, employee engagement and sales, emotional intelligence in the Caribbean, and research gap. The databases that I used were Emerald Management, EBSCOhost, ProQuest, and ABI/Inform Global. Specific criteria chosen ensured that the articles were peer-reviewed and were restricted to more 80% published in the last 5 years to ensure they were current. The literature review has been organized by themes and subtopics for ease of reference.

### Conceptual Framework

The concepts that guided this exploratory case study were rooted in how emotional intelligence and employee engagement are viewed in organizational performance in general. Kahn's (1990) theory of personal engagement and disengagement serves as a foundation for employee engagement. Kahn highlighted that when employees are personally engaged, they express themselves cognitively, emotionally, and physically when they involve themselves in activities to which they ascribe meaning. Adkins (2016) noted that in December 2015, 50.3% of U.S. workers surveyed were not engaged, and 16.8% were actively disengaged. The numbers were similar to the prior 11 months of the year. Further, Effectory International (2018) in the

Global Employee Engagement Index (2018) noted that from 56 countries surveyed, there was less than 30% engagement. Wisker and Poulis (2015) researched emotional intelligence and sales performance, and they found that consistent with prior research, the effects of emotional intelligence on job performance is not always linear in effect. Wisker and Poulis supported the concept of emotional intelligence and the sales associate's ability to manage their own emotions and those of others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), and Wisker and Poulis suggested that researchers and practitioners not discount the concept of emotional intelligence as one of the potential factors that contribute to sales performance. Balanescu (2018) noted that although emotional intelligence could not predict success, a satisfactory career or efficient leadership, it is one of the important components.

In some organizations, employees are required to act in a specified manner toward customers. The actions require employees to change their outward appearance such as facial gestures, motions, and voice intonation. This is known as surface acting. Lee et al. (2019) noted that surface acting could have negative effects on employee job satisfaction, the disconnect between their true feelings and the surface acting to lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout. One instance where surface acting is necessary and almost unavoidable is where language and cultural barriers exist. Surface acting is used to show empathy (Feyerabend et al., 2018). In cases where there is a disconnect between the employee and the customer, the interaction could be frustrating for both involved. In the service industry, where employees are sometimes exposed to less than favorable

interactions from customers, having organizational stressors such policies, systems, and structure leads to emotional exhaustion. (Kashif et al., 2017)

Schneider et al. (2018) discussed potential drivers for employee engagement at the organizational level, although there is not a lot of research on the drivers, organizational practices, supervisory support, and attributes of the work itself were found to be three main ones. Consistent with Kahn (1990), Schneider et al. (2018) argued that when people can be more engaged in their work, engagement will be positive and yield the kinds of behaviors that ultimately produce organizational success. Jena et al. (2018) and Meintjes and Hofmeyr (2018) noted that employee engagement is a driver of business success and connects employees to their organizations. Meintjes and Hofmeyr (2018) found that a sense of being valued and appreciated is a key driver of positive organizational outcomes such as engagement. Milhem et al. (2019) noted that employee engagement is a dyadic relationship. Employee engagement is not independent of organizational work conditions. Ethical leadership also affects the level of employee engagement. In conditions where there is a relationship between ethical leadership and employee engagement or between employee engagement and employee performance, employee engagement has the potential to mediate ethical leadership and employee performance relationship (Sugianingrat et al., 2019).

Research conducted by Kahn (1990), Adkins (2016), and Jena et al. (2018) helped define employee engagement and situate it within the context of organizational success. Although more than 50% of the U.S. workforce is not engaged, it is important to explore what the antecedents of employee engagement are.

## Literature Review

### Emotional Intelligence

The rational component of human behavior (eg. intelligence) has long been given priority over the irrational or emotional component, and consequently, the role of emotion has been less understood. (Cho, Drasgow et al., 2015). Emotional Intelligence first appeared as a concept in the 1990's after being coined by Salovey and Mayer.

Emotional intelligence includes the ability to understand behaviors in social settings, to identify the subtleties of emotional responses, and to utilize that information to touch others as is seen fit, in a controlled manner. (Mayer, Caruso et al., 2016). Utilizing a definition from Salovey and Mayer (1990), Clark and Polesello (2017) referred to emotional intelligence as a subset of social intelligence that represents three individual level abilities related to feelings: appraisal and expression of emotions of self and others, regulation of emotions for adaptive and reinforcing mood states, and utilizations of emotions for solving problems. (Clark & Polesello, 2017). Staub (2016) believed that the history of emotional intelligence is not to be separated from the history of race and class in the United States. One dimension that is common through them all is self-control, it is a key component of emotional intelligence. Fayombo, (2012) conducted research among University of the West Indies students in Barbados, and noted the emergence of a model using emotional intelligence components as predictors suggesting training of university students in appropriate emotional intelligence skills to enhance the university students' academic achievement, career success and fulfilment.

Emotional Intelligence was broken down into four constructs as follows by Goleman (1995); self-awareness (knowing one's own emotions better); self-management (emotional control); social awareness (being aware of others' emotions); and relationship management (the ability of motivating and inspiring others by using emotions).

According to Goleman (1995), the constructs exist in a hierarchy. Each one must be mastered before advancing to the next. It is necessary to identify emotions before they can be managed. Similarly, it is necessary to be able to manage emotions before being aware of emotions in others. After a person has mastered the social awareness necessary to recognize emotions in others, they can use that along with the previous two, they work together to motivate and inspire others. Goleman (1998) indicated that unlike IQ which is stable and relatively unchangeable, emotional intelligence can be improved through learning and practice.

#### Emotional Intelligence Models

While the literature does not provide consensus on the definition of emotional intelligence, there are models with constructs that have been in use and help to guide the application and research of emotional intelligence. Understanding of the concept can be gained by following the way it evolved. There are three models of emotional intelligence - the ability model, the trait model and mixed models that consist of both trait and ability. The ability model is the Mayer-Salovey (1990) Model. The trait model is the Petrides Model (2009) and the mixed models are comprised of two, Goleman (1998) Model and Bar-On Model, (Bar-On, 2010).

#### Mayer-Salovey Model

The Mayer-Salovey (1990) model of emotional intelligence utilizes a four-branch approach. The four branches are recognize emotions; manage emotions; use emotions; and comprehend emotions. (Mayer, DiPaolo et al., 1990). In research designed to examine characteristics of perception of emotion in visual stimuli in adults, Mayer, Di Paolo et al. (1990) noted that in healthy people, the ability to appraise and express emotions, and use them for motivational decision-making were all related skills. The researchers also found that emotional perception extended beyond facial expressions and included colors and novel graphics. The results of the research were suggestive of the fact that aspects of emotional intelligence appear to be abilities that can be measured. Mayer et al. (1990) also noted that the fact that qualities like empathy, involve clearly defined skills, as opposed to attitudes alone, individuals with interpersonal problems may have a skills deficit that can be improved through training.

Mayer et al. (2016) revisited the previous work and revised the four branches of their model to enhance its usefulness. Additionally, emotional intelligence has been positioned among social and personal intelligences. The authors highlighted seven principles that shaped their thinking on emotional intelligence. Some of the principles included the fact that emotional intelligence is an ability and is best measured as such; emotional intelligence is a broad intelligence; it is a member of the class of broad intelligences focused on hot information processing. Hot intelligences involve reasoning with information of significance to an individual—matters that may chill our hearts or make our blood boil. People use these hot intelligences to manage what matters most to

them: their senses of social acceptance, identity coherence, and emotional well-being. (Mayer et al., 2016)

The fourth branch of emotional intelligence according to Mayer et al. (2016) is managing one's emotions. The types of reasoning included are effectively manage others' emotion for a desired outcome; effectively manage one's emotions for a desired outcome; evaluate strategies to maintain, reduce or intensify an emotional response. Monitor emotional reactions to determine reasonableness; engage with emotions if they are helpful; disengage if they aren't; stay open to pleasant and unpleasant feelings as needed and to the information they convey, complete the fourth branch.

The third branch of the Mayer, Caruso et al. (2016) model, is to understand emotions. The types of reasoning contained therein are recognize cultural differences in the evaluation of emotions; understand how a person might feel in the future; recognize likely transitions among emotions; understand complex and mixed emotions; differentiate between moods and emotions. Appraise the situations that are likely to elicit emotions, determine the antecedents of emotions; and label emotions and recognize relations among them; complete the third branch.

The second branch of Mayer, Caruso et al. (2016) is facilitating thought using emotion. The types of reasoning include selecting problems based on how one's ongoing emotional state may facilitate cognition; leveraging mood swings; prioritizing thinking by directing attention based on feelings; generating emotions to relate to others; and generating emotions to help judgement and memory.



The first branch of Mayer, Caruso et al. (2016) emotional intelligence is perceiving emotion. The types of reasoning expected include identifying deceptive or dishonest expressions; the ability to accurately discriminate emotional expressions; understand emotions in the context of culture; express emotions accurately when desired. Perceive emotions in others accurately through vocal, facial or behavior cues; and identify one's own physical state, feelings and thoughts; complete the list of types of reasoning.

The branches were from the original Mayer and Salovey (1990) research but were modified in 2016. The four-branch model shows problem-solving areas of emotional intelligence. The authors noted that areas could be further sub-divided into areas of generating emotions. This revision of the four-branch model has allowed the inclusion of more problem-solving instances than before.

#### The Bar-On Model

Trait emotional intelligence models refer to the self-reported perception of emotional and social abilities. The Bar-On model (2010) is the most widely used and examines a cross section of emotional and social competencies. (Bar-On, 2010). Bar-On (2010) described them as non-cognitive capabilities. As a distinction, Rastogi et al. (2015) noted that cognitive capabilities are involved in the act or process of knowing. They include the capabilities of perceiving, recognizing, conceiving and reasoning. Dippenaar and Schaap (2017) used the Bar-On model in research on coaching intervention on the emotional and social intelligence competencies of leaders in a financial services company. The Bar-On model includes five areas, intra-personal

competency, which allows for self-expression of thoughts and feelings constructively.

Interpersonal skills are another included competency, which refer to how people relate to each other. Stress management, adaptability, and general mood are the remaining competencies.

#### The Petrides Model

The Petrides Model (2009) is the second model built on trait emotional intelligence. Di Fabio and Palazzeschi (2015) utilized the Petrides model (2009) for research among students where they examined scholastic success beyond that attributable to fluid intelligence and personality traits. The Petrides Model (2009) appeared more promising because it was more comprehensive than the Bar-On Model (2010). Bhalerao and Kumar (2016) studied the role of trait-based emotional intelligence of leaders in cultivating the attitude of commitment amongst subordinates. The study conducted in the information technology sector in India found that the nature and manifestation of emotional competencies differed across hierarchies. Trait-based emotional intelligence in leaders was not potent in fostering higher levels of continuance commitment or normative commitment. The nature of the job designation could be crucial to the organizational commitment affected by emotional intelligence. Bhalerao and Kumar (2016) found that the mode of communication between leader and follower in the information technology sector is predominately impersonal and dominated by emails, not leaving much room for emotions.

#### Goleman Model

Much of what is commonly known about emotional intelligence has been popularized by Goleman. Utilizing the mixed model of emotional intelligence, the components are (1) self-awareness, this refers to recognition of one's own emotions; (2) self-management, the management of one's own emotions; (3) social awareness, understanding how to interact with others; and (4) relationship management, managing one's emotions as well as others. (Goleman, 1995). An emotional competence is a learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance. (Rastogi et al., 2015). Goleman (1995) noted that emotional competencies build on each other in a hierarchical manner, one must be mastered before moving on to another.

#### Emotional Intelligence and Sales

Delpechitre et al. (2019) highlighted that the salesperson is the life blood of the organization because of his contact with customers, despite being at the bottom of the organizational chart. The retail sales process entails interacting with different types of customers, making sales presentations, handling their objections and complaints, negotiating, solving their problems, and finally closing the sale. The process requires self-awareness, being adaptive, empathetic, maintaining a calm demeanor and remaining stress free. These attributes constitute emotional intelligence and indicate that salespeople's emotional intelligence influences their sales performance. A salesperson with high emotional intelligence should be resilient and able to handle the emotionally threatening consequences of failure which is common in the life of the salesperson. (AlDosiry et al., 2016). Gardner and Lambert (2019) conducted a study among

adolescents in Jamaica to examine age differences between self-esteem and trait emotional intelligence as predictive of depressive symptoms. Perceived emotional intelligence, can allow an individual to utilize emotional information to aid in problem solving. (Gardner & Lambert, 2019)

Studies conducted by Wisker and Poulis (2015), and Zehetner and Zehetner (2019), specifically with salespeople found that emotional intelligence was positively related to sales revenues. In the research conducted, the enhanced sales results were not merely market influences. AlDosiry et al. (2016) examined data where Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MSCEIT v2) was used as the instrument with car and consulting services salespeople from 17 automotive retail stores in Denver, Colorado, and found no relationship between EI and objective sales performance. AlDosiry et al. (2016) recommended that future researchers investigate a broader performance model or evaluate the nature of the emotional intelligence construct at the definitional stage.

Shukla and Srivastava (2016) noted that organizations that offer training in emotional intelligence combined with stress management training tailored to their employees provide them opportunity to acquire necessary skills, in order to deal with the customer service in retail businesses. Organizations are now looking to the sales function not only to generate new sources of business but to build and maintain relationships with customers. (Ogilvie et al., 2017). This relational value will bring future business and retain existing customers. Further, it is important to note that considering the stereotype associated with an overly eager salesperson, elevated employee contact (i.e., high levels of effort) can make customers feel overwhelmed or think of the salesperson as being too

pushy if effort is not regulated well. Adversely, the customer can feel frustrated and dissatisfied when contact becomes too frequent, with repeated phone calls, emails, texts, and visits. The customer may be less likely to proceed or continue with salespersons perceived as overly aggressive or encroaching in their approach.

Delpechitre et al. (2018) noted that when salespeople possess the ability to perceive their customers' emotions, evaluate their own and customers' emotions accurately, and utilize this knowledge to regulate relevant and suitable emotional responses, customers are more likely to exhibit customer value co-creation behaviors. Delpechitre et al. (2018) highlighted that the three outlined dimensions of emotional intelligence influence customer outcomes at varying levels. Two of the dimensions of emotional intelligence, using emotions and perceiving emotions, were found to positively impact customer value co-creation behaviors. All three dimensions of emotional intelligence influence the customer's commitment to the salesperson but at different degrees. (Delpechitre et al., 2018)

Briggs et al. (2018) proposed that sales managers implement training programs to help salespeople overcome the negative effects of emotion appraisal ability and help them strengthen the positive effects, which will fundamentally improve sales performance. Self-regulation training can help do both. The dual positive effects of self-regulation training can help salespeople effectively manage customer exchanges by analyzing the emotions of self and others in a healthy manner that reduces exhaustion and increases customer service. (Briggs et al., 2018)

Li, Feng et al. (2019) examined retail network firms in the virtual e-commerce market and noted that if a retail network firm ceases to meet the needs of customers because of a low level of emotional intelligence, it will lose ground to competitors. Retail network firms can evaluate their emotional intelligence abilities and attempt to improve those abilities. The results of improvements in firm emotional intelligence are increased customer satisfaction, competitive advantage gains, and more e-commerce sales. The components of emotional intelligence that the retail network forms need to master are the ability to emotionally perceive and analyze, emotional generalizing and expression, emotional coordination and leading, emotional control, and adjustment. (Li, Feng, & Zhai, 2019)

#### Employee Engagement

Employee engagement has been described using different phrases within the literature. It is sometimes referred to as work engagement, or job satisfaction. Various factors could drive employee engagement. (Jiang & Men, 2017). Employee engagement is the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organization and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. It is a positive attitude held by the employees towards the organization and its values. (Salimath & Kavitha, 2015). Engagement is about motivating employees to go a little further for the organization. They have a passion for their work and see the organization as more than just a paycheck.

One of the earliest works on engagement examined the idea of people being members of groups and how they work to protect themselves from isolation and engulfment. Kahn (1990) described those roles as personal engagement and personal disengagement. Personal engagement was defined as the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. (Kahn, 1990). The definition of engagement by Kahn (1990) was subsequently described by Saks and Gruman (2014) as deep and substantial. Engagement involves a rational choice in which individuals make decisions about the extent to which they will bring their true selves into the performance of a role. Most distal to an understanding of engagement is the experience of the individual employee, thus positioning engagement as an individual-level variable that influences and is also influenced by external and broader forces such as organizational alignment. (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015). Combining organizational alignment and employee engagement allows the human resources department to enhance the employee's performance through training and gives the opportunity to focus organizational development and changes.

In an effort to streamline the definition of employee engagement, Shuck and Wollard (2010) reviewed existing literature. One of the main issues noted was the inconsistencies in the language describing the concept. It is one thing to get the conceptualization correct and another thing to get the operationalization correct (Macey & Schneider, 2008). A measure of how satisfied an employee is with conditions of work may not be reflective of the constructs that constitute employee engagement and could be

employee opinions. Employee engagement concerns the individual, not the masses, and is a personal decision that cannot be mandated or forced. Engagement in work is a personal experience inseparable from the individualistic nature of being human. (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Employee engagement is a long-term and on-going process that requires continued interactions over time in developing a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind. (Singh, 2019)

Macey and Schneider (2008) characterized employee engagement as positive feelings a person has towards their job. They noted that engagement comprises trait, state, and behavioral constructs, in addition to the work and organizational conditions that could facilitate them. When those traits and personality attributes combine, there is the inclination to experience work in positive and active ways that allow for going beyond what is necessary and initiating change to facilitate organizationally relevant outcomes.

Work engagement is a theoretical construct proposed by Maslach and Leiter (1997, 1999) that combatted the prior defined Maslach Burnout Inventory (1981). As opposed to looking at the high negative scores associated with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment, the opposite pattern of high positive scores was now representative of engagement. An interesting concept that Leiter and Maslach (2017) highlighted was that engagement fluctuates. An employee could therefore move between different levels of engagement, for different tasks, at different times, instead of always being fully engaged. Macey and Schneider (2008) thought of engagement as having some cost in the form of risk to the employee. In that regard, they felt that organizations ought to promote a sense of trust that employees will benefit from



the psychological and behavioral relational contracts that are a part of employment. The way in which employee engagement is viewed by both the organization and the employee could affect productivity, loyalty and profitability. Potdar et al. (2018) noted that employee engagement is a strong dynamic for organizational success that differs from commitment and involvement. Jiang and Men (2017) noted that besides financial incentives and working conditions, employee engagement can also be impacted by social contextual factors, socio-demographic, and job characteristic variables.

Dagher et al. (2015) used an amalgamation approach. Employee engagement was described as promoting integration of a satisfied individual with commitment to the company who continuously improves, possibly reinforced by financial rewards, thereby increasing job satisfaction and repeating the cycle. Not only is this employee engaged but they are also emotionally attached to the organization. Dagher et al. (2015) argued that self-efficacy has a positive influence on employee engagement, via its three dimensions which are vigor, dedication, and absorption. When an individual believes that they possess what it takes to make a difference, they pursue those tasks with a singular focus and often do not stop until they are complete. In this regard, they may appear more motivated and could potentially work longer hours without realizing it, or without complaining. The results of the study by Dagher et al. (2015) supported findings of prior research. Employee engagement could be increased when an employee believes in their capability to successfully fulfill the requirements of the job. On the contrary, Slack et al. (2015) noted that impediments to employee engagement were communication at the organizational level, culture, and shared values. The research specifically reviewed

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and how that could increase employee engagement if employees feel involved. Poor communication about the activities, the tone of the organization that perpetuates the culture, and a sense of shared values could all adversely affect efforts. Similarly, Jiang and Men, (2017) pointed out that transparent organizational communication is useful when employees feel that they can participate in meaningful way.

Dagher et al. (2015) suggested that future research be conducted through a global lens to identify similarities and differences, especially in Arab countries since there was a gap in knowledge. Additionally, it was suggested that research be conducted to examine the climate for engagement. Jiang and Men (2017) proposed that authentic leadership, transparent organizational communication, and work-life enrichment are three important contextual factors associated with employee engagement. While the direct effect of authentic leadership on employee engagement was not found, but the mediation effects from authentic leadership to employee engagement via transparent organizational communication and work-life enrichment were strong and significant.

Suhartanto and Brien (2018) studied multidimensional engagement on retail store performance directly and indirectly through job performance and job satisfaction. Suhartanto and Brien (2018) suggested that a practical implication of their research was to improve the store performance, managers should first focus on building employee engagement toward their job, then second toward the organization. Suhartanto and Brien (2018) noted that engaged employees regard their job as important to the store's

performance; store managers should frequently underscore the importance of the employees' roles.

Employee engagement extends to leadership. Carasco-Saul et al. (2015) noted that among other things, there remains a gap in understanding what leadership behaviors could affect engagement-encouraging cultures. Given that leadership is perceived differently by cultures, the researchers suggested future work be done to understand what leadership style is effective for employee engagement by specific culture. This type of research could be useful in a diversified world. This concept was supported by Miao et al. (2016) who believed that cross-cultural similarities and variations require more exploration. On the contrary, Li et al. (2018) noted that existing literature showed that trait emotional intelligence of leaders has a positive effect on employees. However, they were unable to find research to support it where teachers and principals are concerned. This indicates that further research is still necessary as it is not generalized across sectors.

#### Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement

Akhtar et al. (2015) conducted a study that investigated the effects of the Big Five personality traits, work-specific personality, and trait emotional intelligence, on work engagement among working adults. The results showed that among the hypothesized predictor variables, emotional intelligence had the strongest correlation with work engagement. Based on the results, the incremental validity of trait emotional intelligence in the prediction of engagement beyond personality variables was tested. Previous studies have identified personality as a determinant of engagement. There have been mixed findings about which dimensions best predict engagement because most research

examined extraversion, emotional stability and conscientiousness as related to engagement. Openness to experience that had been omitted in other research, and seen as a weak predictor, was the second strongest predictor in this study. To follow emotional intelligence, openness to experience is linked to resiliency. It is a key component of work engagement as resilient employees successfully control their environment, giving them motivation to pursue their goals. The relationship between openness to experience and resiliency, easily facilitates employees being engaged at work if they score high on those two.

Bande et al. (2015) noted that while it is generally accepted that emotions are a fundamental part of the workplace, job-related emotions are an under-developed area of study, specifically in sales. Resilience provides not only the ability to cope with a current situation but equips the employee for the future, should similar challenges occur.

Devonish (2016) tested the mediating roles of two dimensions of job satisfaction and work-related depression in the relationship between emotional intelligence and task performance. The cross-sectional study was conducted in the Caribbean. The implications of the findings suggested the importance of emotional intelligence should be emphasized in hiring decisions, training and development planning efforts and activities, if there is a need to optimize employee performance.

Han et al. (2017) highlighted that employees' motivation differs. Some are internally motivated, meaning they are driven from within to perform their tasks, while others need extrinsic motivation that could come in the form incentives or rewards. In the food service industry, or other retail environment, a manager's level of emotional

intelligence can affect their employees' performance. Leaders who experience positive emotions and moods are more likely to influence their employees to give good service.

Saranghi and Vats, (2015) noted that there are always firms that endeavor to find and strengthen the drivers of employee engagement. In research conducted using 182 respondents from various Indian organizations it was found that there was a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement. The study does not list emotional intelligence as a direct antecedent of employee engagement but establishes that emotionally intelligent people are capable of showing vigor and dedication. This is consistent with prior research where emotional intelligence positively impacted job satisfaction.

It is important to note that Karim et al. (2015) found that counter-productive work behaviors could affect employee engagement. In cases where there is workplace incivility, employees who are made to feel unwelcome or uncomfortable as a result of the behavior of others, could have negative job satisfaction, up to and including the intention to quit. Some of the impactful attitudes or behaviors could include bullying, stealing, absenteeism, and workplace aggression. In highlighting the negative aspects of incivility, Harold and Holtz (2015) noted that a person who feels they may have been the recipient of uncivil behavior, could retaliate and redirect that behavior to the instigator or towards an innocent party. The behavior could escalate quickly and affect the organization's culture negatively. Similarly, Miao et al. (2016) noted that leaders' emotional intelligence is more strongly related to subordinates' job satisfaction in low in-group collectivistic and low humane oriented cultures. This highlights the fact that emotional intelligence is often

context-based. In high humane oriented cultures, leaders display care about followers irrespective of their emotional intelligence. The social norms obligate them to do so. The followers in these societies may not be moved by the displays. (Miao et al., 2016)

Mishra and Kodwani (2019) examined employee engagement and conflict politics as it related to the allocation resources within the organization. In the descriptive study, conducted in public sector organizations, Mishra and Kodwani (2019) confirmed a negative effect of employee engagement. In instances where employees understood that resource allocation was closely related to being engaged in organizational politics, they get engaged in the organization. Decisions taken within an environment that favor the in-group helps to develop positive emotions. The employees in the in-group do not perceive those decisions to be influenced by organizational politics. Mishra and Kodwani (2019) found that while the out-group gets less organizational resources, possessing high emotional intelligence, enabled the out-group to deal with conflict and remain engaged. Those who are emotionally intelligent do not develop negative emotions even when the environment is negative. In the influence of positive emotions, they stay engaged and do not perceive organizational politics. (Mishra & Kodwani, 2019)

Eldor (2017) recognized a positive aspect of organizational politics and employee engagement. In highly politicized environments, engaged employees reshape their work environment, giving them the opportunity to obtain additional resources that allow them to be more effective and improve their performance. Eldor (2017) noted that the engaged employees, are inclined to view organizational politics as a positive, challenging demand

or even an opportunity. Those who adopt this perspective may be more willing to invest effort in meeting these challenges.

#### Measuring Employee Engagement

The existing inconsistencies in defining employee engagement contribute to some of the challenges with its measurement. Saks and Gruman (2014) noted that a number of instruments were created to measure employee engagement. There are still questions on how to measure employee engagement and the validity of measurement tools.

Joubert and Roodt (2019) conducted research that investigated employee engagement on both the team and individual levels. Most research that uses the JD-R Model is done only at the individual level. The fact that there are multiple roles that individuals, specifically managers, occupy across an organization encouraged the research as a multi-level construct. Joubert and Roodt (2019) utilized testing push and pull factors as well as the UWES-9 (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale). The results confirmed significance between individual engagement and the pull factors of social support, work overload, autonomy and performance feedback tested in the study. Emotional demands was the only push factor that showed a negative relation to individual engagement. The results supported their first hypothesis: The selected pull and push factors were predictors of individual work engagement. Physical demands were found to be unrelated to individual engagement and were omitted from the study conducted by Joubert and Roodt (2019). While the study was only conducted using three organizations, it was done over different inductees with significant sample sizes to make a contribution to the literature. Joubert and Roodt, (2019) suggested replicating the study

across more industries in different countries to see if it yields different results.

Kulikowski (2017) offered support for the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale by conducting a single study that summarized all of the existing findings on the UWES factorial validity. After reviewing the literature, the results were ambiguous and did not definitively resolve the issue of the most valid UWES factorial structure. Kulikowski (2017) found that it is still one of the most commonly used work engagement measures and it is applied almost invariably as a standard measurement tool in work engagement research.

Tomás et al. (2018) utilized the UWES to measure vigor, dedication, and absorption in teachers in the Dominican Republic. The three-factor structure was found to be a good fit for the data being studied. Tomás et al. (2018) noted extremely large correlations among the three dimensions, the correlations provided evidence of overlapping among the engagement factors. Tomás et al. (2018) suggested more research is needed to generalize of the results in other working populations in the Dominican Republic and elsewhere.

Greenidge et al. (2014) utilized Counterproductive Work Behavior Check (CWB-C), across five Caribbean organizations to assess employee intentional behaviors that harm organizations and people therein. Greenidge et al. (2014) suggested that employees who have affective or emotional regulation processes and strategies tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction and engagement. Those employees are less likely to engage in counterproductive work behavior



Shuck and Wollard (2010) noted that in practice, employee engagement has traditionally been approached from the organizational level. The individuals who comprise the organization are the ones affected and are not all the same. They do not move at the same pace and have differences. Engagement occurs at a personal level before moving to the team level. Similarly, while Jiang and Men (2017) did not find a direct correlation between authentic leadership and employee engagement, there were mediation effects via strong organizational communication that positively impacted employee engagement. When organizations openly share substantial, timely, complete, relevant, and truthful information, encourage employee participation, and convey balanced information that is open to scrutiny and holds the organization accountable, employees are more likely to feel engaged. (Jiang & Men, 2017)

#### Employee Engagement and Sales

Anel and Karl (2018) explored the relationship between resilience and employee engagement in a competitive sales environment. Existing sales structure within an organization, involves dealing with competitors, meeting sales targets, and handling rejection. These tasks and interactions can be viewed as emotional exhaustion and serve to disengage the employee. Employee engagement has been found to be a positive outcome of resilience. (King et al., 2016) The current climate of the business environment demands an employee who is not resistant to change and can adapt as the organization needs and can succeed in a chaotic environment. The research was conducted by Anel and Karl (2018) at a pharmaceutical sales company in South Africa. Employee engagement, resilience and perceived organizational support were measured

using different scales. While it has been found that in a sales situation, resilience influences a salesperson's performance through engagement; in this study resilience did not predict employee engagement. It is plausible that the relationship between resilience and employee engagement goes beyond the simplicity of the prediction model that was employed. Jiang and Men, (2017) noted that employee engagement has become a centrally desired outcome for organizational success. After assessing perceived organizational support on employee engagement, it was clear that the relationship between them can also be defined beyond the simple prediction. (Anel & Karl, 2018) Similarly, in examining the relationship between corporate social responsibility and employee engagement, Potdar et al. (2018) found that engaged employees are self-motivated. They are prepared to promote their company's products and services and are prepared to participate in corporate social responsibility activities initiated by the company for the community. Barreiro and Treglown (2020) noted that employees who tend to be good at influencing how other people feel (emotion management) experience higher levels of engagement.

Albrecht et al. (2015) found that employee engagement can be facilitated through training. Systematic focus on training needs, training delivery, training transfer and training effectiveness should be an integral focus of effective performance management and development processes. Barreiro and Treglown (2020) noted that if managers are trained to be capable at influencing others' emotions, they might make others in the organization more engaged. Raemah, and Mohamad Azlan (2018) suggested that retail organizations may consider human resource applications or strategy to leverage the

employee engagement in either retaining the employees, recruiting the best talent, and reducing turnover rates or other motivating factors like benefits. By developing a strong value proposition and positioning the employer branding central to the organization it may lead to a high level of employee engagement.

Kearney et al. (2017) advised customer-centric companies that view recruitment as a strategic activity, to screen to select for emotional intelligence as a key competence when hiring new employees. Companies could consider using an emotional intelligence test and exclude candidates who are poorly suited to customer contact jobs.

Administering these tests early in the selection process could prevent unsuitable candidates from going through to the more difficult, expensive stages of the recruitment process. (Kearney et al., 2017)

Greenidge and Coyne (2014) investigated the mediating effect of positive emotion on the relationship between job stressors and citizenship behaviors, and emotional intelligence on relations between job stressors and emotions, among workers in Barbados. Work conditions as perceived by employees lead to emotional reactions, and an employee's negative appraisal of the work environment induces negative emotion, this can consequently increase the likelihood of the employee to engage in counterproductive work behavior. (Greenidge & Coyne, 2014)

Strobel et al. (2017) reviewed an organizational approach that involved proactive strategic scanning of organizational members at all levels. The intention of the review was to foster discretionary involvement of employees in strategy and in turn help boost employee engagement and add value to the human resources management process.

Strobel et al. (2017) noted that the market environment, makes it important for organizations to have employees who act proactively and strategically. The use of future-oriented messages in the recruitment phase could allow potential employees to assess the culture of the organization and become engaged early in the process.

### Measuring Emotional Intelligence

According to El Ghoudani et al. (2018), there are two main models of studying emotional intelligence - ability and mixed models. Assessment instruments have been developed to measure emotional intelligence, they also have predictive ability, and ensure validity and reliability. The ability model utilizes a self-report instrument known as Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS; Wong & Law, 2002). WLEIS includes items that refer to the perception, understanding and regulation of one's own and others' emotions.

The Mixed Model or Trait Emotional Intelligence model (2007) differs from the Ability Model. A questionnaire is utilized to assess tendencies rather than performance tasks. (El Ghoudani et al., 2018). There is also a self-report measure that forms a part of the assessment. El Ghoudani et al. (2018) noted that WLEIS was developed in Asia with English as the official language. There has been interest in using it in different countries. There must be adaptations to allow for the difference in culture and to ensure validity based on the original intention of the instrument.

In another study that examined team emotional intelligence, Wei et al. (2016) noted that team emotional intelligence is different from finding the team's mean. The variable could be team EI diversity conceptualized as team EI separation, as team EI

variety, or as team EI disparity. To facilitate collecting multiple types of data, in the individual-referent EI models, Wei et al. (2016) first collected either individual referent subjective or performance EI data and then aggregate these individual level data to the team level by averaging them. In the team referent models, prior to aggregating the team level construct, the referent of the individual subjective EI measure was shifted to the team. (Wei et al., 2016)

Krishnakumar et al. (2016) highlighted that existing measures of emotional intelligence were ineffective because they were not measuring emotions at work within the correct context. These instruments did not target workplace events or decision making. A new instrument was developed that focused on the abilities that should matter in the workplace, the Salovey and Mayer (1997) framework was followed in creating subscales for emotional perception, understanding and management. To model the workplace domain, Krishnakumar et al. (2016) followed the situational judgement test method. A large pool of forty-six workplace scenarios, was tested over a number of studies, to cross-validate them. The measure termed NEAT (North Dakota Emotional Abilities Test) was developed. After five studies by Krishnakumar et al. (2016) to rationalize abilities, some limitations noted were the use of self-reporting in instances of job stress, which may be appropriate, but job performance could be reported by someone else.

In an effort to garner a deeper understanding of how emotional intelligence affects leadership, Segon and Booth, (2015) measured emotional competency using the Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI). Their intention was to test for ethical

management and to ascertain whether a manager could be emotionally intelligent but morally incompetent. At the center of the framework that was utilized was ethical management, which comprised ethical knowledge, virtuous behavior and genuineness. Within the framework of emotional intelligence competencies - self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship management, each competency now included an ethical component. After reviewing a number of cases, Segon and Booth (2015) found that it was possible for individuals to display emotional intelligence competencies and behave unethically. They proposed a variation of the Emotional Competency Inventory framework. Ethical Management should be a mandatory competency cluster at the heart of the framework. If there is a conceptual understanding of ethics, it would inform intra- and inter-personal practice, this would in turn be manifested in virtues like integrity, and trustworthiness.

#### Emotional Intelligence and Leadership

The leader's mood and behaviors drive the moods and behaviors of everyone else. (Goleman et al., 2001). That is why emotional intelligence matters so much for a leader. An emotionally intelligent leader can monitor their moods through self-awareness, use self-management to change them for the better, understand their impact through empathy, then act in ways to boost the mood of those around them through relationship management.

The ability to read one's own emotions accurately facilitates emotional self-control. Leaders who are aware of their own emotions are better placed to control their emotions and subsequently consider the emotional needs of followers. (Zhidong et al.,

2016). Edelman and van Knippenberg (2018) noted that the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness is important, but surprisingly understudied. Longenecker and Mallin (2019) noted that great sales leaders possess tremendous interpersonal skills and the ability to connect with their people through their emotional intelligence.

The success of an organization is often tied to the intelligence of its leaders. According to Ramanauskas (2016), emotional intelligence has also been found to be a key factor in the success. In research conducted where the Balanced Scorecard was used to assess organizational effectiveness, emotional intelligence also had a strong correlation with individual performance. Organizations are assessed using quantitative means to determine growth year over year, adding social-cultural and environmental protection instruments to supplement the Balanced Scorecard could be impactful. Similarly, Leskin and Conine, (2016) found that in organizations where the culture supports and values skills assessment, a 360 assessment which would include emotional intelligence and general business acumen, is a useful tool to identify and groom managerial candidates.

Wang (2015) examined emotional intelligence in a team setting, not just from the leader-follower dyad but how sharing of information throughout the team allows for greater cohesion. The mechanisms through which emotional intelligence works are interpersonal. Understanding a combination of emotional abilities is the best predictor of outcomes in an organization. An individual can be high on managing emotions but low on perceiving them, creating a situation whereby this person is managing his or her

emotions inappropriately (e.g., managing them unnecessarily, managing the wrong emotions or at the wrong time (Wang, 2015).

Edelman and van Knippenberg (2018) addressed the conceptualization and assessment of emotional intelligence as an ability influence for leadership effectiveness. The self-assessment ratings utilized in prior research were found to be a cause for concern, and appeared to be subjective. They proposed that the benefits of emotional intelligence could be understood as important in response to follower emotional expression, as well as using affective displays to influence those followers. Leaders with high emotional intelligence would use that ability to recognize and understand follower emotions to more effectively respond to them.

Nowlin et al. (2018) argued that a salesperson's reliance on affective orientation diminishes with time and training and feedback from the manager should reflect salespeople's changing needs. Specifically, at some point at around a year into the job, salespeople will not need as much training and support as it comes to understanding customers emotionally. The manager should not stop providing it all together. (Nowlin et al., 2018)

Emotional and social competencies derived from emotional intelligence training using a spaced out coaching intervention was studied in research by Dippenaar and Schaap, (2017). Leaders practiced the new behaviors regularly with the support of their supervisors. Bar-On EQ-i assessment and interviews with the supervisors were used to evaluate the programme. Training in intervals using goal setting was found to be more



effective than longer infrequent sessions. Participants reported improved self-confidence and expression of emotions.

Joseph et al. (2015) summarized prior research on the relationship between leader trait affect and leadership. Some of the work examined emotions with a view to determining the degree to which a happy leader was a good leader. This provides credence to the notion that trait affectivity can motivate a person towards a desired state. Mukonoweshuro et al. (2016) highlighted the complementary nature of the constructs of servant leadership and emotional intelligence, and noted that soft skills like influencing ability, and relationship management competencies are built using those constructs. Mukonoweshuro et al. (2016) found that leaders endowed with servant leadership and emotional intelligence competencies were better equipped to harness the energies of their teams towards attainment of the vision and create high trust and integrity.

A key component of emotional intelligence is the ability to manage one's emotions. (Mayer, Caruso et al., 2016). In a study that examined the regulation of emotions in leaders, Arnold et al. (2015) noted that it may affect leaders in a different manner from employees who serve customers. Factors like frequency of interaction, and the routine nature of the interactions, may allow leaders to regulate their emotions and have genuine reactions. The emotions displayed by leaders with their employees would require deep acting as opposed to regulating surface emotions from random encounters. While it is important to note that the results found positive association between transformational leadership and genuine emotion, Arnold et al. (2015) suggested future

qualitative research be done to support the theory between transformational leadership and the forms of emotional regulation.

Kim and Kim (2017) highlighted that given the association of emotional intelligence with leadership, emotional intelligence-related aspects warrant inclusion in the selection and promotion process, as well as in the regular evaluation process. If the organization prefers transformational leaders over transactional or laissez-faire leaders, the emotional intelligence of emerging leaders could be examined, or their social relationships with their protégés could be observed. Kim and Kim (2017) noted that emotional intelligence, despite widespread awareness, still seems to be viewed as good-to-have in practice, as opposed to must-have, in a performance-centered, result-based organizational setting.

### Summary and Conclusions

The major themes in the literature connect emotional intelligence to employee engagement and both relate to leadership and sales. Researchers have found that the success of organizations depends on employee engagement. In the retail environment, that role falls mainly on the sales associates who interact with the customers. Emotional intelligence too, especially in leaders, has become a determining factor for success. To understand emotional intelligence, researchers have conducted studies to enhance their understanding of personality traits and employee emotions. Emotional Intelligence was broken down into four constructs by Goleman (1998) - (1) self-awareness; (2) self-management; (3) social awareness; and (4) relationship management.

Studies on the effects of employee engagement in organizations showed a direct connection to the concept of emotional intelligence and leadership. Salimath and Kavitha (2015) described employee engagement as a positive attitude held by the employees towards the organization and its values. Other themes that appeared in relation to emotional intelligence and employee engagement were: (a) measuring emotional intelligence, (b) leadership, (c) measuring employee engagement, (d) sales, and (e) organizational success.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the research methodology that was used for the research. An exploratory single case study design was chosen to examine the impact of retail store managers' emotional intelligence on employee engagement in St. Lucia. Recruitment was conducted via emails, and the participants included between fifteen to twenty retail store managers, who had been in their position for over a year. The primary objective of the study was to gain information about the topic from the participants' perspectives.

The general problem is that there is an issue identifying, acquiring, and retaining top sales talent in organizations. The specific problem is that the manager's direct role in employee engagement through an organizational culture of caring may be lacking. In cases where the organization's objectives are profit-centered, the manager may place more emphasis on the customer than the employee. Without emotional intelligence, the manager may lack the capacity to lead, which could result in turnover in the organization.

Even though there is existing research on emotional intelligence and employee engagement, there is still a gap in knowledge from the retail perspective as well as in the

Caribbean. The research in this study may contribute to the body of knowledge on emotional intelligence and employee engagement from the retail store managers' perspective.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore how retail store managers use emotional intelligence to influence employee engagement in St. Lucia. To address the gap in the literature on emotional intelligence, employee engagement, and the retail environment, I conducted interviews with between 14 store managers from retail organizations in St. Lucia.

In this chapter, I explain the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, the sample size, and sampling technique. I discuss the data collection instruments, as well as the plan to conduct recruitment, ensure participation, and data collection, and data analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion on trustworthiness, which includes credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and I presented ethical considerations for this study.

#### Research Design and Rationale

Emotional intelligence and employee engagement have both been researched in the context of the work environment. Many studies have cited Kahn (1990) on employee engagement. Goleman (1995) has appeared in work on emotional intelligence. The research from this study can be used to contribute to the literature on how those two concepts are perceived by retail store managers in St. Lucia.

The overarching research questions that guided this study were: What are the perceptions of retail store managers in St. Lucia regarding how they use emotional

intelligence to influence employee engagement? How do retail store managers see themselves as contributing to the organization's culture?

The methodology for this study was qualitative. Qualitative research is undertaken to get a greater understanding of a potentially unknown phenomenon (Murshed & Zhang, 2016). Qualitative methodology was appropriate because I intended to explore how retail store managers perceive their emotional intelligence affects employee engagement, using qualitative research provided insight into an unknown phenomenon. Alase (2017) highlighted that interviews are viewed as conversations with a purpose and help to develop a relationship with the participants. I was able to explore the participants' experiences.

According to House (2018), the basic function of quantitative research is to explain human behavior. The focus on what is known allows for a cause-and-effect relationship. Quantitative research methods focus on the development of generalizable rules. The research object is reduced and explained with reference to precisely specifiable conditions (House, 2018). A quantitative approach would not have been appropriate in this instance.

I did not choose a phenomenological approach for this study because my goal was not to examine the lived experiences of the retail store managers but to be exploratory in nature and collect information. Willis et al. (2016) noted that phenomenological research describes the essence of a phenomenon as lived by the person who has had the experience. I conducted the study in the geographic location of the Caribbean, but an ethnographic approach was not appropriate because the culture of the managers was not

the subject of the research. Van Maanen (2015) noted that ethnography research results typically in a written representation of cultural understandings held by others. Morse (2015) highlighted that a narrative enquiry would allow for personal stories and recollection of events by the participants but that would not have been appropriate for specific interview questions that I asked in this case study.

I selected a qualitative exploratory case study was the design that for this study. I did not select an explanatory case study because the aim was not to explain causal effects (Yin, 2009). A descriptive case study was not the best fit because I would only have described the subject. In an exploratory case study, the researcher can use a strategy that could enlighten a situation in which the intervention has no clear set of outcomes (Yin, 2009). Retail store managers were selected from major retail organizations that operate in St. Lucia. Burkholder et al. (2016) noted that case study research involves a detailed and intensive analysis of a particular event, situation, organization, or social unit. I selected the case study design instead of other designs because it provided a platform to explore the perceptions of emotional intelligence and employee engagement from the managers' perspective. Tai and Ajjawi (2016) noted that a case study uses multiple sources of data collection to develop a contextual understanding of phenomena. Yin (2009) highlighted that a case study is appropriate when the researcher is exploring a contemporary phenomenon. My goal in this case study was to explore how retail store managers in St. Lucia perceive their emotional intelligence influences employee engagement and contributes to the organization's culture. This case study may uncover patterns of perception that are common in managers in the Caribbean. The themes that arose during

the data analysis could provide valuable insight to the organizations' leaders and human resources departments and could be useful for training.

### Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher in this study was to collect relevant data that could have been processed to help answer the research question. This was done by first identifying potential participants and inviting them to be a part of the study. I had direct contact with participants after recruiting them by email and sending consent forms. It was my role to ensure that the participants felt comfortable being a part of the process by explaining in detail what the process entailed. Yin (2009) noted that archival records are unobtrusive because they are not created as a result of the case study but cited the fact that it can be deliberately withheld as a weakness. I was the interviewer during the in-depth interviews of this qualitative exploratory case study. The research was being conducted in the Caribbean via Zoom and did not present the opportunity for researcher bias because the researcher did not know the participants personally, or professionally, nor had the researcher worked in their industries, or with them in any capacity. Fusch and Ness (2015) cautioned that one of the most difficult dilemmas the researcher will face is hearing and understanding the perspective of others. The researcher was the data collection instrument and was cognizant of it. From reviewing the literature, I was aware of how emotional intelligence could influence employee engagement and conducted the interviews without interjecting an opinion and considered all participants' viewpoints. I used reflective journaling and bracketing to address any bias that arose. Alase (2017)



noted that bracketing is necessary for the researcher, so that participants can make their contributions freely.

I used interviews and reviewed archival data for data collection. I conducted the interviews using open-ended questions to encourage participants to speak freely on the topic. In places where probing questions were necessary, I did not interject with any suggestions based on their experience. This minimized the opportunity for researcher-bias. I collected the interview data. I transcribed, coded, analyzed, and interpreted the interviews. My role as the researcher was to explore store managers perceptions of emotional intelligence and employee engagement. There were no conflicts of interests in the research. I emailed each participant a two-page summary of the research after the dissertation was complete.

### Methodology

According to Kothari (2004), through qualitative research, we can analyze the various factors that underlie human behavior and motivate people to behave in a particular manner. Using an exploratory case study design, I interviewed 14 retail store managers in St. Lucia. Tai and Ajjawi (2016) highlighted the need to justify the methodology as well as the methods. I chose interviews because they would allow for immediate feedback and could be more in-depth than questionnaires. Vasileiou et al. (2019) noted that data saturation was achieved faster with a homogeneous sample; by the 12th of 60 interviews, in their research, there was no new information. The interview consisted of nine open-ended questions to answer how, why, or what relative to emotional intelligence and employee engagement. The questions were designed to allow

the participants to speak freely on the subject and provide insight from their perspectives. Data saturation was achieved when no new themes emerged.

The second method of data collection was reviewing archival data. I requested data from the last three years that included information about hiring, attrition, profit, and loss, and utilized information available on the internet. Reviewing this data within the context of emotional intelligence and employee engagement contributed to the established themes and constituted triangulation.

#### Participant Selection Logic

The purpose of participant selection logic is to ensure that the participants are suitable for the research being conducted. The population of this exploratory case study was retail store managers in St. Lucia. The store managers were selected from major retail companies across the island. The types of organizations included furniture stores, retail banks, general merchandise stores, clothing stores, restaurants, and telecommunications providers. Store managers are appointed by the organizations and have supervisory responsibility for sales associates. There were 14 participants. Participants were selected because they fit the criterion needed for the study, which was retail store managers. I further qualified the potential participants as having the necessary experience to answer the potential interview questions if they had been in their appointed role for at least 1 year. The participants were identified as being from the retail sector by an umbrella body member list, then I contacted them via email and invited them to participate in the study. The umbrella body is a private sector member-focused organization that preserves a healthy business environment in St. Lucia and currently has

120 members. Forty-nine members are retail organizations. I contacted the umbrella body via telephone indicating my interest in their members to be potential participants in the study. Each member organization of the umbrella body submits contact information that is kept on file. Information is collected for the owner, manager and emergency contact person and includes the physical business address, business telephone number, email address and mobile phone number for each organization's representative. I achieved data saturation when at least four participants offered the same thematic answers to questions posed. Guest et al. (2020) noted that in a homogeneous sample, 6 or 7 interviews reach 80% saturation, to reach 95% saturation, 11-12 interviews may be required. Guest et al. (2020) highlighted that base size appeared to have no effect on the outcome, and suggested a base size of four interviews, with assessments for saturation after six interviews. Vasileiou et al. (2019) noted that in single case research, data saturation could be achieved with 15-30 interviews. I achieved data saturation in this study after eight interviews.

This study had a specific set of retail store employees as boundedness which means that data were collected from retail store managers only. It was also bound by place because the study was conducted in the Caribbean. The specific island is St. Lucia.

### Sampling

I used purposeful sampling for this research. According to Vasileiou et al. (2019), a large sample size is not necessary if a smaller sample can inform the research. The need for over sufficiency is not applicable if the rich, thick data can be provided with smaller sample sizes. In the case of this study, because there are not hundreds of large retail

organizations in St. Lucia, interviewing 14 participants was sufficient. Tai and Ajjawi (2016) noted that there is no magic number for the correct sample size. The justification must account for the scope of the research, the nature of the question, and the methodology being used. Sufficiency can be determined after data collection and iteratively reviewing the data. (Tai & Ajjawi, 2016).

Yin (2009) advised that replication logic should be distinguished from sample logic in case studies. Case studies are not the best design to test the prevalence of a phenomenon but they can provide in-depth information from a small sample. Interviewing participants in the same field in different locations is an opportunity to have replication.

#### Instrumentation

I collected data for this research study through electronic interviews using Zoom and archival data. I developed the interview questions by reviewing the literature with the research questions in mind. I developed the interview protocol from previous courses and it is included in Appendix A. I emailed potential participants inviting them to participate and to return an Informed Consent form. The emails are included in Appendix D. I made an audio recording of the interviews to allow for ease of review.

To ensure dependability, I asked each participant the same questions. I established sufficiency by ensuring that each question in the interview was related to the central research questions. I created the interview questions using the research questions.

#### Field Test

I emailed the questions to four individuals who are qualified management professionals asking if they felt the questions were comprehensive enough to answer the research questions. One HR professional in St. Lucia thought the questions were appropriate to answer the research question but questioned whether St. Lucian professionals were aware of emotional intelligence at the level that I was researching. I provided working definitions of key terms - emotional intelligence, employee engagement, and organizational culture by email prior to the interview, when the participant consented. One university professor noted that the focus could be on customer-intensive or service business, and not on a specific type of business. Two retail store managers noted that the questions were comprehensive enough to answer the research question. One of the retail store managers pointed out that the order in which the questions appeared could be changed for a more conversational interview.

#### Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I chose a qualitative exploratory case study design to explore the perceptions of retail store managers emotional intelligence on employee engagement. I recruited the participants voluntarily through the umbrella body. I contacted the potential participants via an email message after the information was provided by the umbrella body, to request their participation in this study. I selected the participants based on the criteria that they are retail store managers, manage a subordinate staff that includes sales associates, and they had been in the managerial position for at least a year.

Kothari (2004) noted that the major emphasis in exploratory research is on the discovery of ideas and insight. According to Yin (2009), interviews are an essential

source of case study evidence. The data that were collected from the open-ended questions asked during the interview process was related to their experience as managers and the use of emotional intelligence, and their knowledge of employee engagement.

Interviews. I invited participants to participate in an interview to explore their perception of emotional intelligence and how it related to employee engagement, in the retail sector. I collected data with the aim of answering the central research question and the sub-question. The interviews consisted of 9 questions listed in Appendix B. I made an audio recording of the interviews using a digital device. The interview was scheduled via email when I made contact with the potential participant. It was scheduled for an hour and recorded with the permission of the participant to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. I informed the participant that I would call them the day prior to the interview to confirm the appointment. The data collection process was earmarked for completion in four weeks. The interviews were conducted via Zoom, in a setting convenient to the participant and the researcher that facilitated recording the interview without interference. Subsequent to each interview that I conducted, I reviewed and transcribed the recordings. After the transcription process, according to the interview protocols, I emailed participants their transcript to give them an opportunity to review and make changes for clarity if necessary. They responded via email as well. I gave the participants 7 days to respond with changes or clarifications if any were necessary, we agreed that if there was no response via email, I would make a follow-up phone call. I considered any transcripts that were not returned with corrections to be acceptable.

As the researcher, I conducted and recorded the interviews. The participants were reminded that their names will not be mentioned.

Archival Data. The phenomena in the case were not historical and allowed for reviewing of archival data. This served as another source of evidence. (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) highlighted that using documentation and archival records will corroborate and augment evidence from other sources.

As the researcher I requested documents that contained information on the number of employees hired, and/or terminated in the last three years. I also reviewed annual reports for data pertinent to the research question. The archival data served to supplement data collected during the interviews. This supplemental data served to add rigor to the research. The types of organizations varied. There were varying types of retail businesses including drugstores, hardware stores, financial institutions, and automotive retail. I asked seven participants to provide archival data. I asked every other participant after their interview beginning with the first. The intention was to have at least half of the participants provide information for triangulation. I reviewed the data cognizant of the fact that they were not produced specifically for this case study.

#### Data Analysis Plan

Yin (2009) noted that a case study is used to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in-depth in its real-life context, and it is useful when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clear. In qualitative research, analysis refers to searching for patterns of relationship that exist among data-groups (Kothari, 2004).

#### Interviews

I audio recorded the interviews using a digital device. Transcription into a word document, after the interviews allowed me to format the data to for systematic coding. I used member checking to assist with the accuracy of the transcripts. Participants were allowed to review the researcher's interpretation of responses for validation. Each participant was given seven days to review their responses and provide corrections if necessary. I reviewed transcripts against the participants' reviewed responses and made changes if necessary. Comparing and contrasting interview responses from the participants and their observed behavior to identify similarities and differences, to search for key elements or emergence of themes (Yin, 2009) constituted a part of the data analysis.

### Coding

Yin (2009) cautioned that for qualitative data in case studies, the researcher has to be prepared to use any computer assisted programs as tools, they are not configured to do analysis as in quantitative research. For this research, I utilized MAXQDA to categorize similar words into nodes, that will allow for in-depth analysis. Connecting strategies such as narrative analysis was also useful. Analyzing each interview question, one participant at a time allowed me to see the development of themes and patterns in a manageable format. I grouped together and analyzed related answers and themes. I reviewed the data in several different ways, made tables of the results, reviewed them and revised a number of times while doing the analysis.

I used thematic analysis on the interviews with the participants. I used in-depth open-ended questions to collect information that could have answered the research



question and sub-question. The open-ended questions allowed new meanings and ideas to emerge from the responses. After listening to the recorded interviews at least twice, and making notes, I used MAXQDA to assist in coding the responses of the participants. Coding followed a word protocol that I developed after the interviews were conducted and the analysis begun. When similar words emerged, I coded them under different terms.

According to Tai and Ajjawi (2016) thematic analysis is used where data needs to be identified and organized in detail. Moving beyond the description and developing a conceptual or theoretical understanding, could elevate the research and help create meaning which is a part of the analysis (Tai et al., 2017). Uncovering those themes allowed me to explore the perceptions retail store managers at a deeper level. I followed Attride-Stirling (2001) six steps for conducting thematic analysis.

1. Analysis stage A: The reduction or breakdown of text: Step 1. Coding of material: (a) devise a coding framework using specific topics or words from the research question (b) divide text into segments using the coding framework in Step 1a. Step 2. Identify themes: (a) once all texts are coded, abstracted themes can be found in coded text segments and (b) refine and edit themes. In this step, I focused by question. How were specific questions answered? After doing that analysis, I focused on answers by type of retail organization. Step 3. Constructed thematic networks: (a) arranged themes, (b) selected basic themes, (c) rearranged into organizing themes to create clusters, (d) deduced global theme(s), and (e) illustrated as thematic network, and (f) verified and refined the networks.

2. Analysis stage B: Exploration of text: Step 4. Described and explored thematic networks or groups: (a) described the network or group and (b) explored the network or group. Step 5. Summarized thematic networks or groups.

3. Analysis stage C: Integration of exploration: Step 6. Interpreted the patterns. In this step I used the themes and how they connected to explore the findings. Here I explained what was learnt, what the major findings were, what applications are possible for other organizations. A general synthesis of the findings and the applicability to those who could use the results is included.

#### Archival Data

For the archival data, guided by the protocol in Appendix C, I requested documents from seven managers for their organization. The archival data which comprised hiring and termination numbers from the store managers and reviewing websites, which included social media pages, for vacancy notices, was analyzed using a descriptive narrative of what was presented and compared to all sites. Data analysis included comparing and contrasting data to identify similarities and differences. Any themes that emerged were noted.

Data for this case study was collected using two sources, interviews, and archival data. Cross-checking and comparing data from both of these sources using triangulation allowed for the establishment of credibility and validity. I used triangulation to help support themes that emerged from both the interviews and archival data sets to ensure accuracy from multiple sources. Noble et al., (2019) noted that methodological triangulation promotes the use of several data collection methods. After the interviews

were coded and analyzed, I reviewed the archival data collected on hiring and termination. It permitted cross-validation and facilitated examination of facts related to employee engagement.

### Discrepant Data

Discrepant data from both the interviews and archival data was not discarded but was presented to show how it relates to the case and to allow the readers and the organizations to draw their own conclusions. There may be valuable insight in something that showed up as discrepant.

### Issues of Trustworthiness

#### Credibility

Yin (2009) offered several ways to ensure that a case study establishes quality as a piece of empirical social research. Tai and Ajjawi (2016) noted that credibility refers to the confidence or believability of the study's findings. While interviews were the main source of data collection for this exploratory case study, notes from the archival data, and transcripts of the audio recording provided an opportunity for triangulation by using various strategies of analysis. I ensured credibility by allowing the participants to review the transcripts via email to check for accuracy and make any amendments necessary to clarify the intent of their answers if they seemed unclear. At the end of the research they were presented with a two-page summary of the findings. This constituted member checking. Keeping a reflective journal during the data collection process helped to establish credibility.

### Transferability

Marshall and Rossman (2016) argued that transferability is an essential component for establishing quality in qualitative research. Transferability is achieved when the results can be transferred to other contexts. In the case of this study, the findings may be applicable to similar retail organization, if the sampling framework is similar. It is the readers' responsibility to evaluate and examine research findings and determine whether they are applicable to other situations. The researcher achieved this by providing thick, rich descriptions of the participants, methodology, and the results.

### Dependability

Yin (2009) established the concept of dependability by explaining that a later researcher should be able to conduct the same study and achieve the same results. A study can claim dependability when it can be replicated. I achieved dependability by providing an audit trail from data collected during the research study. There was also transcription of the audio from interviews. The ability to follow that audit trail and conduct similar research to achieve similar results constitutes dependability.

### Confirmability

According to Alase (2017), confirmability of the study is achieved when the researcher can demonstrate that the data and its interpretation are beyond reproach. As the researcher, I did not discuss my experiences with the topic being researched. I reported only on data collected from the participants and did not introduce my opinions. Keeping an audit trail and reflective journal served to provide confirmability.

## E thical Procedures

Participants for the study were invited to do so via email. Their email addresses were provided by the umbrella body. They received a written informed consent form from the researcher via email. The informed consent form was prepared by the researcher and approved by the IRB and serves to ensure that the research would have been conducted under the rules that govern human participants. After IRB approval was granted, the approval number was issued and is recorded in Appendix D. Data collection began after the approval. Participants were reminded verbally before the start of the interview that their participation was voluntary, and they could have withdrawn if they did not feel comfortable.

Data was kept confidential. There was no mention of organization names, individual names, or any form of organization identifiers. Data was identified by codes that I created to distinguish the participants because names were not used. They were alphanumeric in nature. Raw data was kept on my personal laptop in a document protected with a passcode. The password-protected folder with the raw audio data from the interviews will be kept on my personal laptop and will be deleted after five years.

No identifiable information was written on physical documents. Any physical documents, including signed consent forms, will be kept at my house in a locked filing cabinet and will be shredded after five years.

## Summary

This exploratory case study was used to explore how retail store managers perceive emotional intelligence influences employee engagement. The study was

conducted in St. Lucia with participation from 14 retail store managers. The managers would have been appointed in that position for at least 1 year. Protocols for conducting the interviews and archival data are included in Appendix A and Appendix C.

Two methods of data collection were utilized to ensure validity. Using two forms of data collection is triangulation and helped to make the research rigorous. A detailed information trail was included to ensure dependability. Data records were organized and kept in a password protected folder to insure confidentiality. The data analysis could offer results that would be relevant to human resource departments, and managers of retail organizations who seek to understanding how retail store managers perceive emotional intelligence influencing employee engagement. The results of the study are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4: Results

In this qualitative study, I used an exploratory case study design to explore how retail store managers in St. Lucia perceive their emotional intelligence influences employee engagement and contributes to organizational success. To address the research question and the purpose of the study, I conducted 14 semistructured interviews with current retail store managers. This chapter reviews the research setting related to my exploratory case study before explaining the data collection process, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results of the study, and summary. Using a case study design requires the researcher to have two sources of data to allow for triangulation. I used the archival data documents that included information on hiring and attrition for the last three years and information retrieved from internet searches. To help describe the output from these activities, I included tables later in the chapter to illustrate the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement in retail. The overarching research questions that guided the study were:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of retail store managers in St. Lucia regarding how they use emotional intelligence to influence employee engagement?

SQ1. How do retail store managers see themselves as contributing to the organization's success?

This chapter concludes with a summary of the influence store managers perceive their emotional intelligence has on employee engagement and their organization's success.

## Research Setting

This exploratory case study involved conducting interviews via Zoom and recording the audio and reviewing archival data documents. I selected participants from the retail industry in St. Lucia, including drugstores, supermarkets, communication companies, tile stores, financial institutions, automotive sector companies, beverage companies, insurance services, fashion optical, and food distribution companies. St. Lucia is an independent island situated in the Eastern Caribbean and is home to the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Secretariat.

For this qualitative research, I selected interviews and an analysis of archival data to allow the richness of multiple lenses, which provide data from different perspectives. (Witell et al., 2020). I scheduled each participant for half an hour and maintained privacy by omitting names from the audio recording and the interview notes. In this study, I explored how retail store managers in St. Lucia perceived their emotional intelligence influences employee engagement and organizational success.

## Demographics

The criteria for participant selection for this study required participants to be a retail store manager who had been in their position for at least 1 year. I used random, purposive sampling to select participants. The store manager is directly responsible for the organization's daily operations and is also involved in the staffing process.

I chose 14 potential participants who responded to the email invitation. Witell et al. (2020) suggested that instead of seeking data saturation, researchers should work to the point where new information does not add anything to the overall story or framework.



I stopped at the 14th interview because new information was not being added and the retail organizations from which participants came was sufficiently diverse. The primary demographic data collected was the number of years each participant had been in their managerial role. The data reflects four (28.57%) as having 2 to 5 years of experience, three (21.43%) as having 6 to 9 years of experience, and seven (50%) as having 10 or more years of experience in their current role. The participants in this study were both male and female. The ethnicity of all the participants was black. My purposeful sampling did not include race, age, or gender as a factor.

Table 1

## Participants' Demographics &amp; Characteristics

Participants

bound by geographic location because I researched St. Lucian retail store managers. Recruitment for the study occurred online via emails.

After receiving the IRB approval from Walden University on August 28, 2020, I obtained the email addresses of approximately 49 potential participants from the umbrella body. I sent an invitation email, listed in Appendix D, with a brief description of the study to potential participants. The email asked participants to read the consent form and invitation carefully and respond with the words “I consent” to participate in the study. Sixteen potential participants agreed to participate but two were unable to find the time to do an interview. The 14 participants included in this study were retail store managers from St. Lucia. All the retail organizations from which they came have been in existence for more than 1 year, and some more than 50 years; they are well established in St. Lucia’s business community. After each participant responded to the invitation, I emailed them the interview questions and asked for a convenient time to schedule the interview.

For 6 weeks, I executed the following tasks: (a) participant recruitment; (b) scheduling interviews; (c) conducting interviews; (d) journaling and keeping field notes; (e) interview transcription for data analysis and to enable transcription verification; and (f) revisited existing literature. The audit trail that I created using an Excel spreadsheet allowed for efficient progress checks as I contacted participants and created a checklist of the process. These activities supported in keeping the process organized and helped establish rigor.

The interviews started on September 2, 2020 and happened over 18 days via Zoom video conferencing. I scheduled all interviews at the participant’s convenience,

participants were either at their place of business or home after work, and the researcher used a personal laptop at home. All of the 14 interviews were completed via Zoom and recorded using a digital audio recorder. Each participant was only contacted and interviewed once. At the beginning of each video call, following the interview protocol in Appendix A, I established a conversational tone by introducing myself and outlining my study's nature. I then reminded the participant of the details in the consent form and reiterated that I would not mention names during the interview or written research. This study used data saturation to determine when and if I had collected pertinent data. Within the case and 14 interviewees, sufficient data saturation, and repeated answers to the interview questions occurred. Each of the interviews lasted between 20 and 35 minutes. I collected data during each in-depth interview by using open-ended questions. I transcribed each audio recording verbatim to utilize the data. I emailed each participant a transcript of their interview to ensure accuracy, and this constituted transcription verification. I intended to conduct face to face interviews with the participants in the study. Adhering to the limitations of social distancing imposed due to the Covid19 pandemic, I completed the interviews in an electronic format to satisfy the protocols.

I also collected archival data. I reviewed the information available on company websites, including social media pages and archival data provided by the participants detailing hiring and employee attrition numbers were reviewed to analyze whether public information regarding employee turnover or plan to deal with turnover existed. I collected the archival data after all of the interviews were conducted. The data were collected at my residence and stored on my laptop in a password-protected file without

personal information. I reviewed seven company websites, and two local newspapers to gather the information that was needed to support or disprove interview and attrition data. I wrote the data in note form then added to this study. The collection of the archival data went according to the outline in Chapter 3. Nothing unusual occurred during the data collection process. I used the results to discuss implications and perceptions of retail store managers' emotional intelligence on employee engagement and organizational success.

The combination of the in-depth interviews and archival data allowed for methodological triangulation, which provided the necessary breadth and depth to answer the research question. I provided definitions of both emotional intelligence and employee engagement in the invitation and consent form. Those definitions helped to ensure participants shared a common understanding of the concepts.

After the IRB (08-28-20-0357675) granted permission to begin data collection, I emailed potential participants the consent form. There was no response for at least three days; then, I started to follow-up with phone calls. The responses began to trickle in, and I began to schedule interviews. I rescheduled two interviews at the participants' request. Two persons who agreed to participate could not find the time to do so. The second challenge that I encountered was transcribing the interviews. Before I completed all my interviews, I started the transcription process to stay on schedule with the two-week time period I had mentioned to participants for member checking. The transcription process was a long and arduous one, which in most cases took about three hours to complete. The benefit of doing the transcription myself was that it allowed me to listen to the data repeatedly and truly become familiar with it.

I started journaling to keep an audit trail of my research journey and to help control any biases I may have had. I started on the day that I sent out the first email invitation and consent form. It allowed me a central place to monitor all the activities that I needed to keep in focus to complete the study. I needed to track who I had invited, who responded, saying "I consent," when I scheduled an interview and when I conducted it.

I used an excel spreadsheet because it was easy to keep a tabular approach. Next to each participant, I was able to write notes after the interviews. During the interviews, which were conducted by video chat, I watched their faces for expressions and non-verbal cues that could have been data. I did not want notetaking to be interpreted by the interviewee as a lack of interest, which could have been a distraction. Immediately after the interview, I listened to it to make notes for the audit trail. The next time I listened to the interview, I transcribed it.

I found that all participants were interested in the research topic and were inclined to speak with me about their experiences. Providing working definitions of emotional intelligence and employee engagement in the invitation email gave all participants the same explanation of the subject. They allowed for a discussion from a similar starting point.

### Data Analysis

Roberts et al. (2019) noted that utilizing a thematic analysis allows the data to be described and interpreted for meaning. I used MAXQDA software to import my interview transcripts from a word document. Nodes separated the data for each interview question. The data analysis process began with a review of participant responses. As

described in Chapter 3, I followed Attride-Stirling's (2001) six steps for conducting a thematic analysis.

The interviews allowed me to collect data to answer the central research question. After data collection, I transcribed the interviews verbatim into a word document. I emailed the transcripts to the participants to review for accuracy. The participants emailed corrections or confirmation; I accepted a non-response as confirmation.

After reading the transcripts and listening to the interviews at least twice, I devised a coding framework using specific topics or words from the research question. The responses from each of the questions would fit into one of three codes - emotional intelligence, employee engagement, or organizational success, as deduced from the conceptual framework. Some answers belonged to more than one code. Next, I identified themes; after I coded, found abstracted themes in coded text segments; I then refined and edited themes.

The three coding categories based on the conceptual framework and 19 themes from the thematic analysis are as follows:

Coding: Emotional Intelligence

Themes: a) Controlling emotions; b) empathy; c) influence; d) self-awareness; e) mindfulness f) external motivation; g) personal relationship/individuality

Coding: Employee Engagement

Themes: a) Personal development; b) lead by example; c) motivation; d) coaching; e) communication/rapport; f) autonomy; g) moments of levity; h) recognition & incentives

Coding: Organizational success

Themes: a) legacy; b) chasm; c) customer service; d) create buy-in

I further explored the themes using the MAXDictio query in MAXQDA; this provided word frequency for the transcripts. The word frequency query allowed me to see if there were any codes that I may have missed. I then focused by interview question. How were specific questions answered? In the next step, I arranged themes under each code, (b) selected basic themes, (c) rearranged into organizing themes to create clusters, (d) deduced global themes of emotion management and personalized interaction.

In Step 4, I described and explored thematic networks or groups. Next, I summarized thematic networks and groups. Lastly, I interpreted the patterns. In this step, I used the themes and how they connected to explore the findings. Here I explained what I learned, the major findings, what applications are possible for other organizations. I included a general synthesis of the findings and the applicability to those who could use the results.

The global themes of emotion management and personalized interaction were arrived at after organizing themes could fit into their description. In the study results section, I describe the participants' responses that are a part of the organizing themes. Leaders who have a good grasp of emotion management could better control their own emotions and those of others. This ability would encourage more open and honest communication and could allow human resource professionals and retail leadership the latitude they need to function more efficiently. The participants' responses also highlighted that personalized relationships within the retail sector leave room for



improvement. Not only would improved relationships help retail leaders to tailor opportunities to suit the sales associates, but those actions could allow for a meaningful and dedicated effort to the specific sales associates based on their interests and needs. Work in these areas could help retail organizations to become more efficient at handling interpersonal relationships and to foster employee engagement; which directly affects retention.

### Evidence of Trustworthiness

#### Credibility

Liao and Hitchcock (2018) encouraged informative use and improved reporting of credibility techniques to promote methodological progress and better quality evidence in evaluation studies. I collected data for this research from a diverse group of store managers. The researcher established credibility through research design, sampling, data collection, thick description, reflexivity, limitations, and delimitations. I utilized participants' transcript reviews, which were exchanged via email to constitute member-checking. Documentation of the data analysis strategy, triangulation, and an audit trail provided the researcher with multiple information sources to arrive at conclusions. The semi-structured interviews assisted in gathering pertinent information from the retail store managers. I used the archival data provided to examine and analyze existing data against the backdrop of the interview information. The reference to books and articles in the literature review helped me support the participants' theories. This study reveals each participant's thinking, conducted in their natural settings, concerning their perception of

how their emotional intelligence influences employee engagement. It shows the collective data from 14 interviews and reviewed archival data from seven companies.

#### Transferability

As stated in Chapter 3, the results of this study may be transferable to similar retail organizations. Due to this study's exploratory nature, it is difficult to determine if similar institutions' studies could yield the same results. However, the results may be transferable because of the rich data collected from participants; the store managers generalized their experiences within the contexts. One strategy used to help improve transferability in this study is the participation of diverse retail store managers. I reported the data provided by the diverse group of participants using quotes to preserve authenticity. Diversity in the type of business allowed the thick description of concepts, identifying cultural patterns to show the transferability of research findings to other areas. My description identifies the participants' job titles and the number of years with the organization. For this research, I adopted a detached approach to allow acceptance of interpretations of the participants' responses that differed from mine. I coded, categorized, and grouped participant's responses into themes. These steps could help future researchers understand the topic and its context.

#### Dependability

Yin (2009) explained that dependability would allow future researchers to follow the protocols established to achieve the same results. For this research, I designed a step-by-step methodological approach; I also used an audit trail to document what occurred during the data collection process. The audit trail kept as an excel spreadsheet allowed

me to see what was happening and what was still outstanding. There were audio recordings of each interview and verbatim transcriptions.

### Confirmability

To help ensure confirmability during the study, I used bracketing. I did not mention my personal experiences during the interviews. Bracketing ensured that there was no influence on any of the answers that were given by the participants. Alase (2017) noted that research demonstrates confirmability when the data and its interpretation is above reproach. After each interview, as a part of the bracketing technique, I created reflective memos. Goldblatt et al., 2011 noted that researchers could use member checking and reflexivity to enhance confirmability. In this study, I achieved member checking by allowing participants to review a summary of their responses. Only one participant changed two sentences to revise words that more closely reflected how they felt after reviewing their responses. I coded the member-checked transcripts and identified themes that developed.

### Study Results

I used MAXQDA to assist in identifying common themes by analyzing each interview and highlighting the themes. Multiple themes emerged during the analysis, and for several of the interview questions, the same theme was recurrent for many of the participants. Attride-Stirling (2001) noted that organizing themes group main ideas proposed by several basic themes, then come together to form a global theme. In this section I explored how the organizing themes helped to answer the research question and sub-question. RQ1. What are the perceptions of retail store managers in St. Lucia

regarding how they use emotional intelligence to influence employee engagement? SQ 1.

How do retail store managers see themselves as contributing to the organization's success?

While seventy-one percent (71%) of the participants had never heard of the concept of emotional intelligence, because I provided a working definition in the invitation and consent form, they recognized the concept. They were able to speak freely about it. All of the participants noted that it involved identifying, understanding, and controlling emotions.

In Table 2 below, I depict how the thematic analysis evolved. There were basic themes that fed into organizing themes and finally into two global themes. In Table 3 the frequency of themes is listed. The themes were instrumental in answering the research question. In Table 4, I indicated the percentage of participants that endorsed each basic theme.

Table 2

Thematic Analysis From Basic Themes to Global Themes

Basic Theme

Table 3

Frequency of Themes in Study

Themes

### Organizing Theme 1: Emotional Behavior Resolution

This theme, as illustrated in Table 2, comprised the basic themes of changing moods, acting based on identified emotions, identifying own emotions, understanding others' emotions, and teamwork. It is discussed from most to least endorsed by participants. All participants identified with changing moods. Ninety-two percent (92%) of participants related acting based on identified emotions to emotional intelligence. Responses related to emotion were mentioned by participants twenty-six times within the interviews.

#### Changing moods

All of the participants offered a response related to changing sales associates' moods. Some had longer-lasting effects than just a temporary boost.

Participant 1 offered a longer term approach that included bonuses and amenities compared with sixty-four percent (64%) of the participants who would lead by example.

Participant 4 noted that,

the mood here is always very cheerful. They are always laughing and joking; for the most part, the atmosphere is good except when they would slack off at their task, and their mood will change, but it always gets back to being jovial. Once I am happy, they are happy.

Participant 9 would lead by example,

I'm an upbeat person. They call me the storyteller. I can always find a story to go along with whatever the situation is. I have been working since age 14 so I have a

lot of experience when it comes to workplace scenarios, or interpersonal scenarios. I would crack a joke, tell a story, try and rally them up.

Participant 13 offered,

Because I can cause the employees to either be upbeat, optimistic, I can change the way they behave and respond, and therefore I think I also have to be mindful of the way I comport myself and the way I do things. I must have that awareness all the time because I think that how I do, what I do, etcetera goes a long way to affect those around me.

#### Acting based on identified emotions

Ninety-two percent (92%) of the participants acknowledged acting based on identified emotions as a related to emotional intelligence. Participant 8 noted,

It is challenging, but as a manager, you have the responsibility of being a psychiatrist. You have to be aware of how you affect your staff. And you have to be fundamentally aware of how your staff is different. One thing you do to one affects another entirely different, you have to be a shrink, and you've got to be clear on that. Unless you are working in an organization that makes widgets, and all you need people to do is pull one thing from this point and put it on the next point, you can do whatever you want. In our businesses today, what we need from people is engagement. We need them fully engaged; you need to supply them with the environment, making them most likely to function. There needs to be a fundamental baseline job satisfaction fulfillment, and it doesn't come from being paid a high salary. Engagement comes from employees understanding what they



do, enjoying it, getting recognition, being rewarded for it, and tracking their performance. And they know exactly how their performance affects and influences the organization. That is what creates real job fulfillment, the money moves people to get to the office, but it doesn't motivate people to do better and be more productive. The only thing that truly motivates people is engagement.

Participant 9 spoke about mindfulness as it relates to attitudes,

I recognize that if you have a bad day, it does pass on to the team. As the manager, not so much as a team member, but as the manager, it filters down.

Participant 10 acknowledged that as a manager emotional intelligence “means knowing how to control whatever it is that you are faced with. How you go about dealing with issues, problems, difficulties, how you deal with things.” Participant 12 found it useful, “being able to step back and trace the feeling, and the emotion and identify the trigger. It is very important to identify the trigger for you to try to regain control of the emotion.” Participant 13 noted,

For each employee, though, I use different strategies or approaches because they are all different. Some people are a bit tough; other people aren't. So it is knowing the employees well and learning how to broach the subject without offending them, making them feel good about themselves and the job.

#### Identifying own emotions

Seventy-one percent (71%) of the participants found identifying their own emotions critical to how they deal with others. Participant 2 underscored,

Having wisdom about different emotional aspects of people. So you can understand your employee's emotions. You have to control your own emotions to affect somebody's emotions, positively or negatively. So it can go both ways.

Participant 3 noted,

It is matter of putting your emotions in check, for the situation at hand, you are in a professional environment, you will need to react in a manner which is always professional, obviously, we are all human, we have this tendency to let our emotions take control, when we are under stress or when there is a difficulty.

Participant 6 valued, "becoming aware of your emotions, who you are, being in control of your emotions, and knowing how to respond to different persons and different situations."

Participant 11 offered that emotional intelligence,

Links a person's awareness of their emotions and interactions with their environment or the things happening around them. How their feelings come to bear or how taking into account the feelings of others comes to bear. Some people are aware of things, but they are never motivated to make changes. With emotional intelligence comes assessing and evaluating the emotional interaction and adapting and influencing change by the way you interact.

Participant 12 offered insight that covered more than one theme,

If you don't have a grasp of your emotions, if you don't have an understanding of what the phrase is - emotional intelligence, but just to be aware. Be aware that people are human beings. I think HR and staffing are the biggest challenge in any

business, or any business with a high head count. If you are not able to navigate and understand these things, you will not be able to get the most out of your team, and you can't meet your objectives.

#### Understanding others' emotions

Sixty-four percent (64%) of the participants acknowledged understanding others' emotions as an important step in dealing with sales associates and people in general.

Participant 7 noted,

I think it means, on an elementary level, just having an awareness. An awareness that the things you say, how you act, what you do can impact people's emotions. The type of emotions that you display can also affect how people think and feel. I think it is something as you become more experienced, especially working with people, dealing with people, becoming more aware of your interactions and their impact. I think it takes some time.

Participant 8 highlighted the importance of,

Being mindful of the emotional status of the people around you. There are lots of cues, physical cues, verbal cues, and other little things, signs that will give you an understanding of what their disposition is at any given point in time. It is useful to be very mindful of that. To be aware of that and notice any small changes, you don't necessarily need to act on them then, but you need to track and see what is happening to be clear on what is occurring.

Participant 12 said,

I can understand my thoughts, my awareness, how my behavior, what I do, my mood, the actions, and how that can impact others. I think that is also my capacity to put myself in the other person's shoes and understand it from their perspective. I think the main thing is my understanding of what I can do or what is possible to affect the other person.

Participant 14 noted,

I will be honest with you until you brought about the phrase, it never occurred to me that it is something that we all need to possess in, not only managerial roles but in our day to day interaction with people. Not only employees but people. You have to understand that everyone is not the same, so you can't deal with everyone with the same energy, the same approach, the one size fits all because it will not work. As an individual, you know you want different tasks performed. You have to know your team, know your strengths weaknesses, and to see how you can use them to achieve what you want from your team.

### Teamwork

Fifty percent (50%) of the participants noted that teamwork is an integral part of employee engagement. It affects individuals who comprise the teams and the overall success of the organization. Participant 3 approached their team as a collective and said, "You find out about their goals, you help them along in achieving those goals and then you have more of a committed person, they are more engaged in terms of selling, in terms of performing their task." Participant 4 was the only manager who did not perceive any

challenges because of the "way we operate with them; we have always been open. They see themselves as a part of the business."

Participant 5 would like to have everyone feel as though they are on the same level. They said,

I call everybody in the organization 'boss', they do not feel as if I am above them, the whole intention is for everybody feel like they are on my level. Or that I am on their level for that matter. In doing so, I am able to understand and they are able to come and talk to me as much as possible. It could be a difficult thing because sometimes you have to pull things out of people, in different situations. You don't know what they are going through in their relationships or at home.

Participant 6 offered an answer that gave some insight into how their organization views teamwork and the customer satisfaction process,

We are focused on employee engagement in the organization. The managers and supervisors have received training on the leadership challenge by Kouzes and Posner. So we are keen on modeling the way, encouraging the heart, inspiring others to act, encouraging and recognizing deserving employees, and getting them to start the day off on the right foot. There is now a daily briefing, between 7:45 and 8 am before we open up. Everyone comes around in a circle and talks about anything, allowing sales associates to start with a refreshed mood, focused on the customers, focused on sales, focused on having a positive working environment, and a positive shopping experience. So it helps to start the day on a good note.

Participant 7 had a similar outlook, where they worked to ensure that the team's behavior would always be at the highest standard. They highlighted,

I speak to them in terms of what the expectations are, and I always try to use the example of, if you were in the customer's shoes, what type of service would you want? Overall, we have a big problem with the quality of customer service that we deliver at my organization and in general. Sometimes you interact with people, and you don't see any connection between the business's success and their success, so that's what I try to do, make the connection for them. Even if they may not be perky or say things exactly how I want them said, I always want their communication with the customer to be good. So they are trying to resolve a problem, they are trying to be accommodating, they are trying to assist.

Participant 9 noted,

I let them know that as much as they know I can do their job, I can't do everybody's job at the same time. So there are times I say "we need to all do it together". I think I am pretty successful in getting them to see the goal. Whether it is a target, whether it is just keeping the lines down.

The responses that emerged under this organizing theme contributed to the researcher's exploration of the store managers' perception of their emotional intelligence and how it impacts employee engagement.

#### Organizing Theme 2: Attitude Adjustment

The basic themes that comprised this organizing theme were individuality, reward and recognition, moments of levity, extrinsic motivation, and effective communication.

This cluster's basic themes emerged from questions used to explore how retail store managers deal with a group's emotional intelligence and employee engagement.

### Individuality

Sixty-four percent (64%) of the participants noted that developing a personalized connection with sales associates helped them see those associates as individuals.

Participants described some of their thought processes and the organization's guidelines regarding how they felt about their role in seeing the sales associate as an individual.

Participant 3 noted that in their training, sales associates, " ... are seen as family. You have a common goal, but everybody has their individual goals, so you try to align the two and try to make it work both in favor of the company and the individual." In that organization, while everyone is an individual, they are part of a family, and their personal development is essential. Participant 4 noted that they "value the employees and do things for them," Some of the things they did for them included having social gatherings and offering monetary and product incentives. Participant 6 noted that they would understand "what their talents are and how the organization can help them achieve their goals." Participant 8 offered that they "deliberately engage in non-work related discussions ... to understand what is happening in their private lives." Participant 9 noted, "you have to get to know everybody on a personal level, if you don't know their background, then you don't know how to appreciate how they work, especially when it comes to some of the challenges like scheduling." Participant 10 felt that appreciation was significant, and having an employee of the month program was one way to make their sales associates feel like more than just a required employee.

Participant 11 described a different approach to satisfying people at every level within the organization and the sales process.

Taking an interest in the individuals, whether it is the employees or even the shareholders, at any level, because as a manager, you are in between your shareholders and the employees and taking a personal interest in them and in the operation, helps me to function better and to be able to serve everybody's needs. Some people come to work because they have a job description. When you begin taking a personal interest in what the employee experiences, what the customer feels, what the shareholder expects you to accomplish and deliver to them, you start delivering better because you can cater better to those needs better than merely words in a job description. So I try to see the person behind the position; if it is an employee, what do they need? If it is a customer, what do they need? If it is a shareholder, what do they need? What does the director expect of me? What are they hoping to get out of the experience? So when I make my contribution, I feel like it is more meaningful to each person.

Participant 12 found that their structure, encompasses frequent interaction with staff. Regular one-on-ones to ascertain how they are doing in terms of their job expectations - meeting our expectations, and gauging their performance, the work environment. We generally tend to ask about their life outside of work.

Reward and Recognition



Participant 5 was one of the forty-two percent (42%) of managers who used this method. They indicated "I try to motivate them by putting certain incentives in place. We set targets and based on achieving targets, you are going to be rewarded accordingly."

Participant 10 indicated that they "have a number of things for them. They get rewards, we have incentives. We have an employee of the month award to show appreciation."

Participant 11 was one of the respondents that utilized reward and recognition but added that understanding employees at the individual level is also helpful.

Although there are certain basic things you can do by way of reward, recognition, and the like, it usually comes back to making sure that you know what they need out of the interaction. This person may be interested in furthering their education or in training to feel like they are growing. These kinds of things can help employees to be more engaged or motivated in themselves.

#### Moments of Levity

Thirty-five percent (35%) of the participants would use humor to create a moment of levity when they needed to change attitudes in the store.

Participant 5 highlighted that,

I try to be as light as possible, cracking a joke to lighten the mood and break the ice. There may be an associate with a challenge, so I may involve some other persons to encourage them to be upbeat because you are not dealing with robots.

You are dealing with people.

Participant 8 noted,

You can strike up a conversation about something else you saw, you move the conversation from work to something light for a little while, it creates an opportunity for humor and breaks the monotony. It creates camaraderie as well as just lightens the situation.

Participant 11 also offered that they, “tend to rely on humor.” Similarly, Participant 13 felt, “one of the simplest things to do is make them laugh.”

#### Extrinsic Motivation

This basic theme occurred a total of eight times in the responses. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the participants would use an external source of motivation.

Participant 1 referred to external motivation. They offered, every quarter I try to do something with them, keep them upbeat for at least three months, and not have them waiting for a whole year for the end of year staff party and to get their bonus. I try to do things to keep them upbeat, keeping the store clean, keeping the environment pleasant, putting air-conditioning units in the shops, those things that they would not get in a regular retail shop. Most of my shops have air-conditioning units. A lot of shops in St. Lucia do not have those amenities. I put a lot of emphasis on the business to ensure that the staff is safe, protected by security, all my shops have armed guards, and that changes the mood; those things do. It goes a long way; I have seen that. It goes a very long way.

Participant 3 spoke of a seemingly more structured and consistent approach for keeping the sales associates motivated. They have pizza days and make trips to natural sites but offered that recently,

I got a basketball backboard and rim and put it outside, so we have department challenges. They talk about it a lot; they are always challenging each other; there is often a wager. That gets them talking and very excited in the store. In terms of new products, when they come in, we give them the first options in terms of trying those products and getting feedback from them.

#### Effective Communication

Fourteen percent (14%) of participants mentioned communication in their responses. Participant 6 found the process of getting to know sales associates to be time-consuming but it was important for the sales associate to have open communication. They noted that,

It is time-consuming to get to know everyone, and having that rapport, can be a little tricky. There is a little bit of a separation. I am starting to recognize a difference between how you perceive yourself as a manager and how people perceive you. Some people might think because you are the manager, they are a little more closed (off). So it is difficult to have that open and honest rapport when your team members are closed (off) because they are hesitant, don't know you or want to make a good impression or, don't want you to see things that they don't think are desirable.

Participant 8 felt that communication was an integral part of the process,

People often feel that as managers, they are having difficulty communicating with their subordinates. Often, communication is tempered and guided by a lot of the emotional noise occurring in a person's life at the moment. Even the things you think you are saying are not the things that are coming through because that individual is in a different space. Something has occurred in their life. You need to be aware of that and look for those cues. You need to acknowledge and understand the communication is two-way. It is what you are saying and what that individual is interpreting of what you are saying. Their emotional disposition can shape that at that time.

Participant 12 also found building rapport to be necessary.

It is continually visiting; I find the face-to-face engagements necessary. People tend to tell you things when you speak face-to-face that they wouldn't tell you otherwise, that they would not share with you, even in a staff meeting. It is personal, and that is how we engage, and I think it is essential to keep them upbeat and keep them motivated and let them know it is not just about work, and the company cares.

Those statements illustrated that participants in each of the organizations had a method or a program to ensure that sales associates were, in the manager's mind, seen as more than a required employee. Besides, the employee was also aware that those things existed because it involved their participation.

Organizing Theme 3: Frequent Staff Interaction

The basic themes that comprised this organizing theme were coaching, personal connection, create buy-in, empathy, and formal training. The responses that constituted these basic themes were to questions the researcher used to explore how managers interacted with their sales associates in a time of need or perceived distress. The researcher asked questions that allowed managers to examine how they perceive their sales associates viewed them. All but one of the respondents thought they had faced challenges when trying to understand their employees personally. The manager's perception of the relationship shaped all the challenges that the respondents identified.

#### Coaching

Coaching was the most mentioned theme under the employee engagement subheading in Table 3. Three of the 14 participants said they would immediately step in if there were a customer interaction that was not going well. Two would do so if they thought they would lose the sale; the third would do it if the sales associate seemed to need help. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the store managers would not interrupt the sales process but would meet with the sales associate sometime after that. Fifty-seven percent (57%) felt that coaching the sales associate would be the best approach.

Participant 2 prefers a hands-on approach,

I immediately coach them. I tell the associates to choose their words differently to ensure they keep their customers if that's what it takes. I will immediately pull them out, let them know what to do, and then they could jump back in. So they can learn or follow what I said and try to grow in that field.

Similarly, participant 6 coached but had a two-pronged approach. They would, butt in and assist on my own, just so that there is some action-learning. The associates can see how I interact with the customers to model that action. I also report it to their immediate supervisor for one-on-one sessions.

Participant 7 also favored coaching but less of an immediate approach. They offered,

I will pull them aside and have a conversation with them. Sometimes I try talking to the associates over some time. You don't want it to be that it's just one situation, and then you take that one example and then make it out to be the norm.

Participant 14 had a different approach based on the type of business they run.

They noted,

I don't interject in the transaction. Until I understand the issue, I am willing to lose the sale to deal with the sales associates separately. Sometimes that customer has been there ten to fifteen times already, and you have read it wrong because you are reading it like she is not upbeat with that customer, but ten visits ago, she had the vibe. When some people are spending money, they hem and haw, and it is not until they are ready that they purchase, so she is not going to be all jubilant. She knows they will buy. So if I interject there, I might create a whole different problem. So I trust my staff that if they don't seem upbeat visually, they know what they are doing. I haven't had a situation where somebody has maybe a personal issue at home, and they have brought it to the sales floor. I have not experienced that.

## Personal Connection

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the participants felt skepticism on sales associates' part when managers attempted to personally get to know them. They were able to offer methods of overcoming some of the skepticism.

Participant 10 found that,

the challenge is you have to make sure that you don't get too personal. While we try to hear them out and understand what they are going through, whether on a personal level or maybe work, we try our best to draw a line. You always must draw a line.

Participant 12 felt that with multiple individuals and different personalities, It takes me sometimes out of my comfort zone. It is a learning experience both ways. So the challenges are that you may come into conversation with some pre-conceived ideas or because of your experiences. You do not want to impose that on the individual, so you have to be careful how you navigate those conversations. People are sometimes just not open to speaking, and sometimes it takes multiple conversations. I think it is challenging to reach those closed-off individuals, that are more private.

Participant 10 noted,

If anything happens, I call the sales associates aside right away talk about it. We are like a family, but we don't take it too personally. So I don't come across too bossy; often, when a customer enters the door, they don't even know who the manager is because we are like one team.

Participant 6 felt that the position naturally causes a strained personal connection.

They offered,

I think that everybody sees me as very jovial, and sometimes I see myself that way too. I think they understand that I have to wear different hats at different times because of the position. So their perception changes based on what is happening. There are team members who do not have that level of trust, not necessarily in me, but in the post, who probably see me and the post by extension, as being somewhat hypocritical, advocating on behalf of the staff, and sometimes the company. When it comes to interpersonal relationships, they know that I have to be serious at certain times. I sometimes dance in the hallway, chair the disciplinary hearing, and have to say goodbye, so they know it comes with the position. And by nature, I'm not vindictive and malicious. Of course, some employees focus only on the negative.

Create buy-in

Forty-two percent (42%) of the participants noted that creating buy-in gave sales associates a stake in decision-making and helped them to be engaged. Participant 8 found that creating buy-in works for their organization.

I have realized that if you allow them to do things sometimes the way that they want to, either you will be pleasantly surprised that they are right, or they may not be correct. Still, they feel as if there was a give and take in the discussion regarding how things can go, it's not my way or the highway, and therefore they have a stake.



Participant 9 also found buy-in to be significant but added the dimension of team spirit.

I try to give them ownership of what they are doing. I think I am successful in getting sales associates to see the goal, whether it is a target or just keeping the lines down. To motivate them, it is like, "Hey, we've got to hit this target, this is our target, this is what we need to achieve in sales." Everybody buys in to try to help; whether it be increasing sales, reducing shrinkage, or reducing spoilage, they buy into that.

### Empathy

Forty-two percent (42%) of the participants felt that being empathetic and finding out what was wrong would be their method if they noticed a sales interaction that was less than ideal.

Participant 2 noted that even in reprimand, there can be empathy. The tone of the manager is important, "you uplift the staff member and they will have more respect for you because you are now teaching them and training them and showing them how it is done."

Participant 13 felt it was necessary to treat people as individuals noting that the same approach will not work for every sales associate. Using empathy can also be useful. They noted that,

when the interaction between the two parties is over, I might quietly take the employee to the side and ask them what transpired between them and give my

input. Ask them about themselves, how they are feeling, or if there is anything wrong because they are not their usual self. And if I believe the person is down, find ways to make them a bit more enthusiastic about things, about the job. Most important is to understand what went on, try to fit myself into their shoes, and try to get them, frankly, to understand it from the customer's perspective. Unless you can do that, it is sometimes challenging if you can only see it from your side, and you are not concerned about how the other person may have been affected by how you responded or dealt with them.

### Formal Training

Twenty-one percent (21%) of the participants mentioned formal training as a way to ensure there was a standardized message getting to the customer, and keeping the employees upbeat. Participant 1 noted that,

What we put in place for them is training, that will give them a boost, so I talk to them, but then also put them through training, because a lot of them have come from different companies and different backgrounds, they may not necessarily have the basic foundation of being a sales associate.

Participant 3 explained a bit of their training,

Part of our sales process involves creating a relationship with that customer. Sales associates are here to know about the customer's needs and why they are asking for a specific product and understanding that the item they are asking for is the

correct one to meet their needs. If they can sell you something better, they do that.

Our guys are very good at that, our customers acknowledge that.

Participant 8 felt that there could be more than one approach. There could be sales training needed, or it may be empathy. They offered,

I will wait, then we will go through a post-mortem on the interaction after the discussion with the customer. Sometimes we will do some training afterward; sometimes, we will do a little role-play. But if I notice that mechanistically they are not following through in the way they should, I will deal with it. If I see something emotional that is happening, we might step out of the room, sit down, have a little bit of a discussion and try to get to the bottom of what could be bothering the person or causing issues.

#### Organizing Theme 4: Training Needs

The basic themes that comprised this organizing theme were mindfulness, positive environment, observation, and hire well. Fifty-seven percent (57%) felt that mindfulness was important in their environments. Fourteen percent (14%) believed that their self-awareness about asking personal questions was challenging.

##### Mindfulness

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the participants mentioned being mindful of how they deal with their emotions or interaction with others. Participant 1 found a disconnection when they tried connecting with employees and as a result, they are mindful about how they communicate.

When I start asking about their families, upbringing, where they currently live, the number of people they live with; they pull back. They are not accustomed to those questions. Associates shy away from these types of meetings and sessions because the content and style may be unfamiliar and uncomfortable; it is tough to reach them personally. They feel like my struggle is not their struggle.

Participant 7 found,

If you have no emotional intelligence, you may say and do offensive things that negatively impact your team. They may not end up feeling respected. They feel a little demotivated, so it is essential. It is a crucial quality or an awareness that you need to have as a manager to create a safe space for your team and lead by example.

Participant 8 highlighted,

At this particular point, I see myself as volatile and capable of knee-jerk or rapid responses or reactions to things. I think that is so because, in my previous job, that is how my employees saw me. They saw me like I could fly off the handle at a moment's notice, and yet I saw myself as rational. I think I have turned around. That last employment position showed me how people could perceive very differently what I was trying to portray from where I thought I was. I have been so much more mindful in this iteration now how I manage that situation.

Participant 11 said,

When I view myself, I am more aware of the areas for improvement, my focus on getting my job done, and the objectives I have are different from what my

employees are looking for. They don't see what I am there to accomplish. I needed to get last month's figures to go up this month. So they are seeing, being friendly, but they are not seeing that I am working toward a goal. So what I am trying to do is find ways to connect to them to accomplish that.

#### Observation

Twenty-one percent (21%) of the participants found observation to be a good method of information gathering. Participant 2 noted that,

I have to learn their personality from observing them from a distance. And then hearing chatter around the business place about their life but if I try to ask directly, they would obviously tell me what I want to hear.

Participant 11 also found observation to be a good way to get information that could help managers understand their associates. They offered,

As a manager, you don't usually see the full picture when an employee comes to you, so unless you are actually observing them in their natural setting, what you get is what they present you with. You have to take the time to interact with them while they do their jobs for you to see what happens. Apart from that, all you get is what is reported to you. You do have to find ways of getting true information by observing interactions when they don't know that you are observing.

As described in Table 2, the themes concluded with the global themes of emotion management and personalized interaction. Themes related to personal interaction were the most frequently occurring in the results under emotional intelligence. I discussed them below.

## Positive environment

The benefits of a positive environment for growth and encouraging change was mentioned by twenty-one percent (21%) of the participants. Participant 4 noted,

Though it may not be their dream job, give them a fair environment. Some of the sales associates work at their own pace. You are not always on their back; once the work gets done, it is not a slave-master type of scenario. I try my best to let them learn at their own pace, as comfortable as possible.

Participant 5 highlighted,

One of the things I tell my staff is that I want independent thinkers. I want people who could solve problems. I always say to them - "solutions, solutions, solutions." I want them to think, so I think doing this helps them to be independent. I tell them that I employ them for solutions. I don't want them to work like robots. In fact, because of that, I do not think I have had anybody leave my organization to work anywhere else.

Participant 11 noted,

One of the things that we try to do is to keep the environment light. So that it then becomes easier to bring about change. Because if you have a light atmosphere, employees are more receptive to suggestions and more receptive to your input. Secondly, whenever a pep talk is needed, you give them the pep talk. Sometimes it may only remind them or keep them more focused to channel their attention to what is most important. That usually does the job and changes things around.

## Hire well

Fourteen (14%) of the participants believed that hiring well could avert attrition issues in the future. Participant 2 noted that they, "motivate and train them into completely what I want them to be. How I want them to approach customers, give them that knowledge." Participant 14 felt that employee engagement starts at the beginning,

It starts with picking the right people from the beginning though, my sales staff especially, you have to know that the job is for you. I have people now who have been there for eight years, three years, they became a part of the organization, and the way they interact with customers shows commitment.

#### Emotion Management

Under the global theme of emotion management, as depicted in Table 2, all fourteen participants identified the management of emotions as necessary. The participants related it to the potential of lost sales and the repercussions of having a dissatisfied customer. Store managers understand that those occurrences have financial consequences. The participants admitted that they would all do something to rectify a situation where a sales associate did not appear to be upbeat in an interaction. Participants outlined their actions to ensure that the sales associates are motivated and engaged. They realized that the retail organization's success depends on the connection between the sales associate and the customer.

#### Personalized interaction

Personalized interaction was the second global theme that emerged from the organizing themes. Two participants thought that personalized interaction while challenging, and sometimes outside of their comfort zones, was necessary but often

uneasy to navigate. Eight participants expressed skepticism on their part and that of the sales associates, because the line of questioning or acquiring information may seem awkward. Three participants mentioned physical observation as one way of getting the information they needed about sales associates.

#### Table 4

#### Percentage of Participants Who Endorsed Basic Themes

Organizing Theme



Organizing Theme

companies that could supply construction materials, and the staff provided the labor. The involvement shows engagement on the employees' part, as buy-in is imperative for a project of that nature to work. Analysis of the data revealed that the two companies that provided the numbers are currently at their optimal staffing number. One company had lost three employees in the last three years due to migration to a foreign country and higher education. The second manager explained that their single loss was due to an employee not returning after maternity leave. One company whose manager spoke of having very engaged sales associates, due to product knowledge training, captured the St. Lucia Employers' Federation Employer of the Year Award for the third consecutive year in 2016. They also expanded to another part of the island in 2019, according to another news report. This could be related to the themes of coaching and personal interaction.

### Summary

At the beginning of this research, I was happy that there was an opportunity to keep a journal that would allow for bracketing of my emotions as I went through the interviews. Some of the interviews I conducted had moments of laughter, and others were matter of fact. No two were the same. I developed a greater appreciation for emotional intelligence and the impetus to continue researching the topic in different areas. Having the opportunity to engage with each of the retail store managers from St. Lucia allowed me to appreciate each of their experiences, analyze the similarities, and examine the differences. Every story was valuable. There was no discrepant data. Each participant made a rich contribution, and after four interviews, I started to see themes evolving. I began to notice saturation in the interviews after nine interviews.

Each interview contributed valuable data to explore how retail store managers perceive their emotional intelligence influences employee engagement. Participants shared their personal experiences and perceptions, which were unique but also provided similarities. I used MAXQDA software to assist in coding, organizing, and analyzing the data. I also used Attride-Stirling's (2001) six steps or stages thematic method to conduct thematic analysis.

Chapter 4 addressed the purpose of this exploratory case study, addressed findings, reported results, and illustrated findings generated from the research and data analysis. The purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore how retail store managers perceive their emotional intelligence influences employee engagement and organizational success. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews conducted using a video-conferencing application. The study used random sampling to find fourteen retail store managers in St. Lucia and have been in their position for at least one year.

The in-depth interviews provided an understanding of how the retail store managers perceived their emotional intelligence influenced employee engagement. I interviewed each participant individually and maintained confidentiality. All fourteen participants met the criteria, were sent an invitation and consent form via email (see Appendix D), they responded, saying, "I consent." This response indicated that they agreed to be a part of the study.

This chapter addressed this research process, including recruiting participants, data collection, and data analysis. I utilized MAXQDA software to assist with coding, organizing, collecting, and analyzing data from the interview transcripts. I transcribed the

interviews verbatim. The data used to write this chapter, transcripts that were only identified by participant numbers 1 through 14, were shared with my dissertation committee members. Data stored on my laptop is in a password-protected folder.

Chapter 4 also included challenges encountered in the study that impeded the data collection process. I have included a table highlighting demographic data on the participants. The study findings contain information that could benefit other retail store managers, human resource professionals, employees, researchers, and others interested in emotional intelligence and employee engagement in retail and its success.

Chapter 4 contained the study setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, results, evidence of trustworthiness, and a summary and transition to Chapter 5. In Chapter 5, there is an analysis of the findings, interpretations of perceptions of retail store manager's emotional intelligence on employee engagement., their shared information and results, the limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore how retail Store Managers in St. Lucia perceived their emotional intelligence influences employee engagement and contributes to the organization's success. I used a qualitative design in an exploratory case study to collect data relevant to the subject. According to Barnham (2015), when a more in-depth understanding of participants' attitudes, patterns, and behaviors is required, a qualitative approach was the best way to acquire data about the phenomena. Using an exploratory approach, I was able to obtain retail store managers' perceptions of emotional intelligence.

Key findings of the study included the importance of having a sense of awareness and being mindful of their own emotions. Participants said that controlling their own emotions was important to the relationship they had with their sales associates. Creating buy-in with sales associates was one way to create employee engagement. Some of the participants noted they could achieve buy-in by creating a personal relationship with sales-associates. Having a clear understanding of the sales associates' personal needs would help with how the store manager treated them within the organization. This personal relationship could affect training, upward mobility, and scheduling. Managers used coaching to reinforce training or address inadequate customer interaction.

In Chapter 5, I present the interpretation of the findings. The chapter continues with limitations of the study and recommendations based on the findings of the study. There are implications of the study's effects and the potential for positive social change, concerning emotional intelligence and employee engagement.

## Interpretation of Findings

The study's findings confirm existing knowledge that surface acting, where employees change their outward appearance such as facial gestures, motions, and voice intonation as described by Lee et al. (2019), can sometimes lead to a disconnect between the sales associate and the customer. Store managers described having to show the sales associates how to interact with customers to model the action and be reminded of the standard. Store managers elaborated on how the ability to control their own emotions affect the sales associates. This relates to the themes of coaching and personal interaction.

Schneider et al. (2018) discussed potential drivers for employee engagement. The research participants understood that their support for the employees was significant in driving engagement. Some participants noted that motivation could be internal but were not opposed to ensuring that the sales associate's environment was positive. That environment varied from one retail organization to the next and included having armed security guards, having discussions around scorecards, and having meaningful conversations during store visits. The findings supported prior research by Meintjes and Hofmeyr (2018), who found a sense of being valued and appreciated is a crucial driver of positive organizational outcomes such as engagement. Participants spoke of offering rewards based on performance and allowing sales associates to try new products they were going to sell, to increase confidence, enabling them to speak from experience. Milhem et al. (2019) noted that employee engagement is a dyadic relationship and was not independent of organizational work conditions. Participants were able to offer examples of providing a positive environment to influence employee engagement

outcomes directly. Participants acknowledged that having amenities such as armed security guards and an air-conditioned building set them apart from the competition and influenced employee engagement. Participants also described the impact of having spontaneous pizza deliveries, or after-work social gatherings, as being beneficial not only to employee engagement but to the organization's success by extension.

Goleman (1995) described four components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness (knowing one's own emotions better), self-management (emotional control), social awareness (being aware of others' emotions), and relationship management (motivating and inspiring others by using emotions). Participants recognized that their self-awareness is an integral part of their success where emotional intelligence is concerned. Several the participants were not aware of the concept before the study but acknowledged how not being in control of their own emotions has had less than favorable effects in the past. Two participants said that they recognized the importance of leading by example when they saw employees acting like them. Each participant was aware of the need to have relationship management with their employees but found that there could be some challenges when trying to get to know them personally. Based on the data collected, participants are aware that they may not be reaching their employees personally but did not connect that to organizational success before this research study.

According to Mayer et al. (1990), qualities such as empathy involve clearly defined skills, as opposed to attitudes alone; this study confirms that store managers with interpersonal problems may have a skills deficit that can improve through training. Gardner and Lambert (2019) found that perceived emotional intelligence can allow

individuals to use emotional information to solve problems. The fact that 71% of the participants would coach a sales associate who appeared to be struggling with a customer shows that the store manager recognizes emotional intelligence as a problem-solving tool. Ogilvie et al. (2017) found that organizations are using salespeople to build relationships for the business; this research showed that store managers understand that the sales associates are the face of the business and work to ensure that it is a reliable point of contact for the customers. Participants spoke of creating buy-in with employees so they understand their role in the organization. They found that autonomy works to foster employee engagement after the initial sales training period elapses.

Singh (2019) highlighted that employee engagement is a long-term and ongoing process that requires continued interactions with time in developing a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind. Participants of this study acknowledged the barriers that they encountered when trying to get to know their employees personally. An opportunity for training in this area may be well received. Suhartanto and Brien (2018) noted that store managers should build employees' engagement toward their job and then toward the organization. This study supports that suggestion as participants discussed ways to influence employee engagement, including reward and recognition programs, bonuses, and other external motivational factors. Employee engagement extends to leadership. Carasco-Saul et al. (2015) highlighted that there remains a gap in understanding what leadership behaviors could affect engagement-encouraging cultures. The information contained in this study has contributed to the literature in that regard as I explored how retail store managers in St. Lucia perceived their emotional intelligence influences



employee engagement. Both emotional intelligence and employee engagement are factors that could affect leadership. This study shows that leaders in St. Lucia perceive that social gatherings, good rapport, recognition, external motivation, autonomy, and emotional intelligence are essential to engaging employees. By extension, they affect the success of their organizations. Li et al. (2018) found that leaders' trait emotional intelligence positively affected their employees. Trait emotional intelligence models, such as the Bar-On (2010) model, refer to the self-reported perception of emotions and social abilities. In this study, participants admitted their own emotions affected their employees and were aware of that influence. Participants spoke of sales associates not being happy if they were down, sales associates not being sure how to react if they worked while visibly sick, and sales associates being happy when they remembered a story from previous conversations.

Devonish (2016) suggested that managers incorporate emotional intelligence into hiring decisions and training if employee performance is to be optimized. In this study, I examined store managers in a sales environment; the environment is, by nature, sales-driven and optimal employee performance is inherent. Results of this study confirm that St. Lucian store managers perceive emotional intelligence to be important to organizational success. One hundred percent (100%) of the participants noted that it is essential to manage their own emotions and those of others. They found that being involved with the sales associates from the beginning of the interview process was an excellent way to ensure engagement as early as possible. In the hiring interviews, they found it was important to get to know the potential employee to determine the fit. Eighty-

six percent (86%) of the participants noted a chasm between how they see themselves and how the sales associates see them. Training could increase employee engagement and reinforce the organization's values to bring congruence.

This study confirms earlier work by Baksh Baloch et al. (2014) that emotional intelligence significantly impacted employee performance and productivity. Store managers admitted that their emotional behavior affected their employees' actions. This study supports earlier work by Bande et al. (2015); psychologically, emotions are strong and can influence a salesperson's behavior. This study's results cannot confirm a correlation to resilience because it was outside of the scope of this study. This study can confirm Li et al. (2019) findings that internal service quality had a significant indirect effect on sales performance through the mediator of work engagement. Based on Akhtar et al. (2015), a practical implication is that organizations can select employees based on personality traits like emotional intelligence by understanding the predictors of work engagement. This study was not able to confirm that because none of the participants had dire issues with attrition. One participant noted that it might be tough to say if sales associates are genuinely engaged if they are out of viable alternatives for employment. They indicated that in the past several years, St. Lucia's job market has been stable, and there is no hiring surge. According to the store manager, disgruntled sales associates, who may be out of options, can stay in jobs. Marwan et al. (2019) noted that employee engagement is a two-way relationship, and leaders who show transformational leadership behavior are more suitable for engaging employees. This research confirms that finding. Participants who had sales training and employee assessments established appeared to

have a different approach for dealing with sales associates. That tactile approach lends itself to having an organization that is amenable to change. This research supports Teoh et al. (2016) findings that managers can exhibit supportive and unsupportive behaviors, meaning there is scope for improvement among even the most supportive managers. The majority of participants in this research admitted to their willingness to coach sales associates if they have a poor interaction with a customer; however, many of the same store managers are aware of existing challenges in getting to know their employees personally. This admission infers that there is still room for training.

Han et al. (2017) highlighted that employees' motivation differs. Some are internally motivated, while others need extrinsic motivation that could come from incentives or rewards. This study confirms Han et al. (2017) findings that in the food-service industry or other retail environments, a manager's level of emotional intelligence can affect their employees' performance. All participants agreed that leaders who experience positive emotions and moods are more likely to influence their employees to give good service. Fifty-seven (57%) of the participants felt it was important to lead by example. Eldor (2017) recognized a positive aspect of employee engagement and organizational politics, noting that engaged employees tend to view organizational politics as a positive, challenging demand or even an opportunity. One participant who works in an organization where business units are perceived differently has always made a point to show up for their business unit and employees with the best possible representation. They admitted that it is a deliberate act to keep the employees feeling good about their jobs compared to other business units.

Seven participants described the formal evaluation process their organizations use to document employee progress. Some organizations allow a collaborative approach and thereby create buy-in with that process. This collaborative approach confirms research by Kim and Kim (2017). Given the association of emotional intelligence with leadership, emotional intelligence-related aspects warrant inclusion in the selection and promotion process and in the normal evaluation process. Participants in this study saw the merit of using evaluations, in most cases, not just annually, but as rolling assessments and working documents that could track growth as well. This study disconfirms, Kim and Kim (2017) observation, that emotional intelligence was seen as good-to-have in practice, as opposed to must-have in a results-based organization. Every participant stated that emotional intelligence was crucial for organizational success and influential on employee engagement.

### Limitations of the Study

In this qualitative exploratory case study, I considered the inability to make causal references a limitation. Simon and Goes (2013) noted that because one group of people had one result, it does not mean similar findings could be generalized for other groups. To determine transferability, I described the initial responses in detail, allowing judgments about the results. I created thick, rich descriptions that included accounts of the context and research methods and raw data examples.

Participants' responses could have been affected by the events they encountered on the day of the interview. To minimize that, I offered to do each interview at the participant's convenience, and before each interview, I asked whether the timing was still

convenient for them. A limitation was that participants might not have answered the questions honestly. I eliminated this limitation by sending each participant a copy of their transcript to review. The review constituted transcription review.

Research bias, which could have been a limitation, was controlled by reviewing the literature to situate the problem in the Caribbean. I followed the established protocols to minimize research bias while conducting the study. I made notes after the interviews and used bracketing to document my thoughts.

One limitation is the fact that the methodology for the research was modified slightly from the original plan to conduct face to face interviews and to do observation. Before receiving IRB approval, the world went into a lockdown because of the coronavirus. I could not travel and modified the interviews to use video conferencing. I also used archival data as the second form of data collection.

A gap in the literature on emotional intelligence and employee engagement in retail in the Caribbean was a potential limitation. There was no suggestion in the existing literature of a way forward that includes the Caribbean in general and St. Lucia specifically.

### Recommendations

The results of this study have contributed to the existing knowledge of emotional intelligence as a concept. The data analysis demonstrates the importance of emotional intelligence for store managers, especially in their leadership roles within the organization. Recommendations for further research include examining emotional intelligence and its influence on employee engagement from the sales associates'

perspective. In Chapter 4, there is an explanation of the codes and major themes that emerged. Themes such as mindfulness, personal development, self-awareness, controlling emotions emerged from the interview data and warrant examination from the sales associates' perspective. Retail store leaders could benefit from a study of that nature.

The purpose of this study was to explore how retail store managers in St. Lucia perceived their emotional intelligence influenced employee engagement and organizational success. While the literature review provided information on emotional intelligence and employee engagement in the workplace, the researcher utilized the study to explore retail in St. Lucia. The retail store managers felt that their ability to control their own emotions was essential to engaging employees and providing a positive environment for the employees. There is an opportunity to undertake a qualitative ethnography study to understand managers' emotional intelligence's cultural interdependence on the organization. Three participants lamented that they had worked in other countries and had employee experiences that were completely different from their present realities.

There are opportunities for training. This study showed more training is necessary for store managers to deal with individual personalities more comprehensively. Participants' responses revealed a significant difference between how managers see themselves any how their employees see them. The larger that gap, the more difficult it may be to have cordial and productive inter-personal relationships that are effortless. The findings showed that leadership styles may impact emotional intelligence and could affect employee engagement. These findings concurred with the literature review that

leadership styles are perceived differently by cultures (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015). Three store managers referred to working in first-world countries and having very different experiences from their current position. Participant 1 stated that with their business's growth, they see each employee as just a number. They tried the personalized approach when the company was smaller and had a family-like atmosphere. They were disappointed by the employees. This significant finding indicates that some managers might be apathetic, not realizing the impact of using emotional intelligence skills to manage, retain, and engage their employees.

I utilized a case study for this research. I conducted interviews using a video software application and used archival data for methodological triangulation. I recommend conducting similar research using a phenomenological design to examine sales associates' lived experiences of how their manager's emotional intelligence impacts their work engagement. Undertaking this type of design would facilitate a comprehensive description of the essence of a phenomenon as lived by a person who has had the experience. (Willis et al., 2016).

The final area for further research would be to research the store manager's emotional intelligence influencing employee engagement using a mixed-methods approach. Utilizing quantitative research for surveys may allow for many respondents who could provide data that gives a measured reality of the problem. Statistical analyses could form data reporting. Using a qualitative approach in the same study will allow for the participant's language to be reported.

## Implications

The general problem is that there is an issue identifying, acquiring, and retaining top sales talent in organizations. (Rodriguez et al., 2019). The store manager's attitude towards and use of emotional intelligence in the organization is directly related to this issue. (Vieira et al., 2019). This research contributes to the gap in knowledge regarding retail store management and emotional intelligence within the retail organization. The research findings included information useful to stakeholders and future scholars researching emotional intelligence and employee engagement within the retail industry. In this section are the implications for positive social change, theory, and practice.

Although Mayer, Di Paolo, et al. (1990) initially discussed the concept of emotional intelligence, there still exists a gap in its deliberate practice and implementation in the workplace. The results of this study can impact positive social change at both the organizational and individual levels. Several participants had never heard of the term but had come to see the significance of emotional intelligence while participating in the study. The information they received and revealed can help them change their approach to interacting with their employees and seeking training in this subject. This change could contribute to an emotionally intelligent culture in retail organizations. This information could be useful for human resource professionals and leaders of retail organizations.

Identifying facets of emotional intelligence while getting to know their employees personally and managing customer service issues with sales associates is an asset to store managers. This ability highlights that managers could apply emotional intelligence to the



retail industry with good results. If implemented and continuously practiced, there can be better interactions from the beginning, eliminating the need for repairing relationships. Emotional intelligence in the retail store manager's arsenal can create positive social change for them and allow the sales associate to learn the concept and apply it in their interactions with their customers. This change would deliberately develop emotionally intelligent sales associates. The customer base of retail organizations would benefit from improved interactions.

Through this study, I explored a cross-section of retail store managers. There is an opportunity to examine how skepticism on the managers' parts affects the managers and sales associates' relationship. Eight of the participants expressed skepticism when trying to get to know their employees on a personal level. The managers perceived that the employee would not trust them to be honest or open up to them without questioning their motives. Developing a practical guide to closing that gap and creating meaningful dialogue and open relationships could help build emotional intelligence and trust. This guide could be beneficial to retail leadership and sales associates, and employees in other industries could benefit from understanding the dynamics between emotional intelligence and employee engagement. A practical guide could be impactful in the manufacturing industry, the agricultural sector, and the tourism sector in the Caribbean.

#### Implications for Theory

The literature review revealed a gap in the inclusion of emotional intelligence in hiring practices. In a study conducted in the Caribbean, Devonish (2016) suggested that managers emphasize the importance of emotional intelligence in hiring decisions,

training, and development planning efforts and activities if there is a need to optimize employee performance. The adaptation of hiring practices and company policies to include emotional intelligence as a competency holds the potential for positive social change. It could encourage schools and training institutes to offer courses that could revolutionize the retail industry's general culture. Widespread training at a school level could impact customer service in general. Future theoretical implications suggest the need for more research on emotional intelligence in the Caribbean. The information from this research on emotional intelligence and employee engagement conducted in St. Lucia could narrow the gap in the literature on the two topics.

#### Implications for Practice

Han et al. (2017) highlighted that employees' motivation differs. Some employees have intrinsic motivation, while others are motivated by external factors. Potdar et al. (2018) found that engaged employees are self-motivated. Barreiro and Treglown (2020) noted that employees who tend to be good at emotion management influence how others feel and experience higher engagement levels. This research supports the assertion that emotional intelligence can be impactful on employee engagement in the retail organization. Stakeholders may find this information useful to design and implement practical ways to include emotional intelligence at all retail organization levels. It could consist of having scheduled one-on-one sessions to improve interactions and training, creating a positive environment, and hiring more efficiently. Leaders who have a comprehensive understanding of the benefits could create a different retail environment.

### Emotional Intelligence in retail leadership

The data collected are generalizable to the current retail workforce in St. Lucia. The analysis in this study may lead to positive social change if leaders, in general, understand the significance of the impact. All participants were in their position for over a year. Seventy-one percent (71%) of the respondents had never heard of the concept of emotional intelligence in this context. They knew components of it separately.

This study shows an opportunity for widespread training for retail store managers; there is a correlation between emotional intelligence and successful leaders. This training opportunity confirms research by Bhalerao and Kumar (2016), which highlighted that organizations must invest in selecting and developing leaders with emotional capabilities. More self-aware leaders may be more open to suggestions and participative discourse that could impact the organization positively.

### Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore how retail store managers perceived their emotional intelligence influenced employee engagement and organizational success. Using an exploratory case study based on emotional intelligence and employee engagement formed the study's conceptual framework. Data collection included the transcripts of 14 retail store managers. The research participants acknowledged that emotional intelligence was influential to employee engagement and the organization's success. The participants provided rich data by their responses to open-ended interview questions.

Data collection included interviews utilizing semi-structured, open-ended interview questions, and a review of archival data. Several themes, including controlling emotions, coaching, and legacy, were generated during the interview transcripts' coding. The specific research question was:

RQ: What are the perceptions of retail store managers in St. Lucia regarding how they use emotional intelligence to influence employee engagement?

The study participants were 14 retail store managers who had been in their position for at least one year.

While this study's findings elucidated how store managers perceived their emotional intelligence to be very influential to employee engagement and the organization's success, some recommendations included more investigation on emotional intelligence and hiring practices. While the need for emotional intelligence training at all levels in the retail organization is apparent and could help create more engaged employees, there is still a lack of literature on the topic in the Caribbean. The research findings have potential implications for additional research and positive social change. Future research implications suggest investigating emotional intelligence from a mixed-methods study that would utilize a description of the phenomena and a quantitative approach to understand the magnitude of training and education organizations might need. A qualitative ethnography study could seek to understand cultural patterns on the interdependency of a manager's emotional intelligence on employee engagement in the Caribbean.

Implications for positive social change included developing more emotionally intelligent and engaged retail organizations. This study's findings provided stakeholders and retail organization leaders with the opportunity to examine gaps within their organization and understand how things could be different. My recommendations for further research would complement the body knowledge of emotional intelligence and employee engagement in the Caribbean.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Thank you for taking the time to participate in my research interview today. The interview today should take about thirty minutes and you are free to stop at any point if you feel uncomfortable. I will be asking you questions regarding emotional intelligence and employee engagement in your organization. I will be taking notes as you respond to each question. I will also be doing an audio recording of the interview to help with accuracy. Would you like to ask any questions or clarify anything before we begin? I will email you a summary of the transcript of this interview within the next two weeks to verify for accuracy. If at any point during the interview, you do not wish to continue, based on the signed consent agreement, you have the right to stop it. Are you ready to begin?

### Research Question:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of retail store managers in St. Lucia regarding how they use emotional intelligence to influence employee engagement?

SQ 1. How do retail store managers see themselves as contributing to the organization's success?

### Interview Questions:

1. What do you do to see your sales associates as more than just a required employee?
2. What challenges have you encountered when trying to understand your employees on a personal level?

3. What do you do if you notice a sales associate who is not upbeat during an interaction with a customer?
4. What do you do to change the moods of sales associates in the store?
5. What does emotional intelligence mean to you?
6. Think of a situation that makes you feel personally connected to your work. What makes you feel that connection?
7. How do you as the store manager influence employee engagement?
8. What are the differences between how you see yourself and how your team members see you?
9. How do you believe a manager's level of emotional intelligence influences employee engagement?

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. You have been an integral part of my research and I truly appreciate the thought you put into the answers and how you made the process a smooth one.

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What do you do to see your sales associates as more than just a required employee?
2. What challenges have you encountered when trying to understand your employees on a personal level?
3. What do you do if you notice a sales associate who is not upbeat during an interaction with a customer?
4. What do you do to change moods of sales associates in the store?
5. What does emotional intelligence mean to you?
6. Think of a situation that makes you feel personally connected to your work. What makes you feel that connection?
7. How do you as the store manager influence employee engagement?
8. What are the differences between how you see yourself and how your team members see you?
9. How do you believe a manager's level of emotional intelligence influences employee engagement?

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. You have been an integral part of my research and I truly appreciate the thought you put into the answers and how you made the process a smooth one.



### Appendix C: Archival Data Protocol

1. Request employee level demographic data. Data can be masked. Include age, and gender.
2. Request information on performance metrics by employee if appropriate.
3. Request team-level performance data, include KPIs
4. Request hiring figures (sum total) by year, for the last three years.
5. Request attrition figures (sum total) by year, for the last three years.
6. Request annual reports from the last three years.
7. Data will be aggregated into a spreadsheet for comparison and will be analyzed using a descriptive narrative related to the research question.

## Appendix D: Invitation and Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study about emotional intelligence and employee engagement in retail in St. Lucia. The researcher is inviting managers who have been in their role for over a year to be in the study. I obtained your contact information via correspondence with the umbrella body. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Amala Luncheon, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

### Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore how retail store managers in St. Lucia perceive their emotional intelligence influences employee engagement and organizational culture.

### Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an interview approximately thirty minutes in length.
- Provide anonymous, aggregated archival data about hiring and termination for the last 3 years

Here are some sample questions:

- What do you do to change moods of sales associates in the store?
- What does emotional intelligence mean to you?
- What challenges have you encountered when trying to understand your employees on a personal level?

#### Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. You are free to accept or turn down the invitation. No one at Walden University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to be in the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

#### Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

Research from this study could benefit managers and human resource professionals who are interested in how emotional intelligence can impact employee engagement. The information gathered could be impactful to the hiring process in the retail industry in St. Lucia.

Payment:

There is no payment for participation in this study. Upon completion of the interview, participants will be given a thank you gift in the form of a gift card for a local coffee shop.

Privacy:

Reports coming out of this study will not share the identities of individual participants. Details that might identify participants, such as the location of the study, also will not be shared. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. Data will be kept secure by putting a password on audio or word document files. Any physical written notes will be taken without names. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone at 347-638-9985 or email at [amala.luncheon@waldenu.edu](mailto:amala.luncheon@waldenu.edu). If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Research Participant Advocate at my university at 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 08-28-20-0357675 and it expires on August 27th, 2021.

Please print or save this consent form for your records.

### Obtaining Your Consent

If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about it, please indicate your consent by replying to this email with the words, "I consent."